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AN IDYL OF THE KING.

BY T. C. HARRAUGH.

"There goes the king, so young and fair,
His smile and laugh so debonaire!
He smiled on me, the rustic maid,
And I shrunk from him, half-afraid.
For he is royal, and wears a crown;
His robes are trimmed with snowy down;
The ring that glitters on his hand
Would purchase all my father's land!"
The maiden looked from eyes of blue,
And saw the courtly retinue;
But more she saw: upon the grass,
Glittering like a bead of glass,
A wondrous ring! It made her start;
She felt the beating of her heart!
He lost the ring—this king of ours,
He dropped it here among the flowers.
"I'll send it to the palace; no!
I'll take it there myself, when low
The sun has sunk behind the west,
And twilight dons her starry crest!"
So to the palace went the maid,
Trembling, blushing, still afraid.
She found the king in robes of state
Beyond the lofty, guarded gate.
"My ring! ha! ha!" the monarch said.
The gentle maiden hung her head.
"I found it on the ground, beset
By many a blushing violet!"
"Nay, maid, I left it there for thee!
It fits thy pretty finger—see!"
Here in the palace thou shalt dwell,
A rose transplanted from the dell;
No maid of honor! far above
That station in this court of love!"
The maiden quickly raised her head—
"No palace home for me!" she said.
"I have a home, sire. Let me go
Back to the summer winds that blow
From morn till night across the heath,
And make it fragrant with their breath."
"Tis true our cottage home is small,
And bare, perhaps, the darkened wall;
But peace is there! My heart is free!
Here in the palace would it be?"
"Nay, let me go!" she pleading said;
And blessings on thy kindly head!"
The monarch smiled and whispered low:
"As thou hast chosen, maiden, go!"
He blushed for shame, then lost his voice
Before the artless maiden's choice!

Whom Will She Marry? OR, BETH FOSS, The Parson's Daughter.

BY A PARSON'S DAUGHTER,
AUTHOR OF "PRETTY PURITAN," ETC.

CHAPTER VII. A RASH STEP.

"Rashness and haste make all things insecure."
In a long linen cloak and brown straw English walking-hat, with its silk trimmings and mottled wing upon the side, Beth Foss, when she started upon her lonely night journey, looked very plain and ladylike, and not at all likely to attract to herself any unpleasant notice.
Over her hat she had tied a thick dark veil, anxious that the moonlight should tell no tales concerning her identity; and as she hurried along the damp, fragrant country road—a little used, thoroughfare, but the nearest way from the depot to the parsonage—clinging tightly in her small gloved hand her portmanteau, she resolved not even to buy her ticket at the Greenwilde depot, in order to avoid observation, and any outgrowing village scandal. But this course was indeed thrust upon her; for though she was already hurrying, she heard the whistle of the approaching train while still quite a space intervened between herself and the depot.
It never occurred to Beth that in this little incident might lay a Providential interdict upon the fulfillment of her plan. She thought, rather, that nothing now should interfere with her purpose; and gathering up her skirts, she ran with all the grace of speed and motion her country life had made natural to her; arriving upon the platform just as the glimmering row of cars came puffing and panting to a momentary standstill, and breathlessly rushed across the up-track toward the nearest carriage.
"That's a drawing-room car, miss," called a voice from behind her, and a man sprung down upon the rails and hurried her along the track to the nearest passenger-coach, swinging her light form upon the steps, just as the train resumed its motion.
"Oh! my pocket-book!" exclaimed Miss Foss, in distress.
If Miles Haines, the station-agent, had not been sure before of the identity of the veiled lady, he had helped upon the train, he was positive, as he picked up the missing valuable and ran beside the now rapidly-moving cars, to hand it to its fair owner, that she was none other than Beth Foss, the parson's daughter.
The feeling of strangeness and loneliness which Miss Foss experienced as she walked into the dimly-lighted car, where there were but few ladies, and all with escorts, and many gentlemen who turned a cursory glance upon the tall, slender figure, with its neat traveling-dress and closely-veiled face, was something quite new to her. She nestled into the furthest corner of the first unoccupied seat, and presently the attention of the passengers reverted to their books and papers, or the dreams from which they had been momentarily aroused by the stopping of the train. Then, thinking it no longer neces-



"And good-by, pretty one," he added, laughingly apostrophizing Bethel from the carriage window.

sary to keep herself closely veiled, Bethel threw aside her light disguise, and sat staring out at the moonlighted landscape, and thinking of Harry Sewall, of her living and her dead parent, of her home, and of Rial.
She wondered where it was that Harry had gone on business, and if he had carried away with him any sadder heart than now lay within her own bosom, though she was going to meet her lover. Try as she might to put away from her recollections of his handsome, honest face, and his sincere blue eyes, they would not be banished; and she seemed to feel and share, in that own soul, the pain she had given the friend of her childhood and youth.
"But I could not marry him," she moaned. "I could only do as I have done. And, perhaps, very soon, Harry will forget his love for me, and, looking back upon to-day, say, 'I am glad Bethel Foss refused to marry me now, and yet I do not like to think that he may feel and say those very words,' she added, still studying the fleeting scenery. "I wonder why it is that I am so selfish, that I must needs wish to retain all the love that ever has been mine! Shall I never had any so satisfying that I can willingly, gladly, fling all other affections aside?"
Thus Bethel sought to read, and could not, the mystery of her nature, her slowly-developing woman-soul. She knew that love was dear to her, that her life revealed in its fervent glow as a flower reveals in the hot kisses of the sun; but could she ever give such passion as it pleased her to receive? Sometimes she felt, vaguely, that as yet she had never sounded the capabilities of her own heart; and, again, she believed that her selfishness would be untaken by her will to fix all of its discovered affection upon one object.
But, presently, from trying to understand herself, her mind reverted to her father, as she had left him sitting in his study, overcome with weariness and grief. What will he now, she questioned, thinking of the bitter loss that had visited their home? And what would he think if he knew where was his daughter, and on what errand bound? And, lastly, Bethel's thoughts flew on to her meeting with her dark-eyed lover. How would Rial—
"Ticket, please!"
The quick, business-like tone of the conductor interrupted Bethel's meditations. She looked up, startled.
"I have no ticket," she responded, handing him a bill.
"From where?" he questioned, looking at her scrutinizingly.
"From Greenwilde to New York," with quiet dignity.
The conductor gave her her change and passed on, while Beth, recalled from her dreamings, somewhat furtively took note of her surroundings; and it was this interested scrutiny that showed her that the seat just in front of her, which she had deemed vacant, had been occupied and probably would be soon again. A gentleman's high hat was in the rack above it, and papers, and magazines, and a small satchel, with long strap attached—a handsome bag, with a name engraved upon its plate which she could have read by looking at it a trifle—lay upon the cushion. Having finished her survey of her fellow-passengers, Bethel turned wearily to the window again. The train made an occasional stoppage, flying along madly between-times, and yet it seemed to her that time lagged terribly and the great city she was so anxious to reach was as far as ever in the distance. In truth, her physical weariness and the monotonous painfulness of her thoughts were rapidly exhausting Bethel's energy, and telling upon her nervous force, despite her strong, youthful constitution; and, at last, after heroic efforts to conquer the lethargy that threatened to overcome her, she fell soundly asleep, with her hat crushed up against the window, and her hands, under her cloak, grasping tightly her portmanteau.

When Bethel awoke she was dazzled, first by long rows of gas-lamps, where before had been only fleeting woodlands and farms, and then by a pair of handsome brown eyes looking straight into her sleepily-opening ones. She quickly drooped her lids again, trying confusedly to recall her surroundings; and presently remembered that she, lonely and unprotected, was journeying toward New York, to meet her affianced husband, Rial Andral; and that those splendid brown eyes she had discovered gazing so intently into her own must belong to the owner of the articles she had described in the seat in front of her; and now, feeling very cold, and uncomfortable, and almost unreal to herself, she sat up straight, and pulled her cloak into prim preciseness, and rearranged her hat, and—all ready to alight—sat regarding the gentlemen in the seat in front of her—for she had discovered that there were two.
It was very rude, she said to herself, indignantly, that they should have been staring at her while she slept. But then Bethel was unconscious of what a strange sight it was to these gentlemen to see a young lady, and she had impressed them with the surety of her claim to that title, traveling alone at midnight; and was equally unconscious of what a very charming face hers was, when studied; and how especially charming, when its oval, snowy fairness was flushed at the rounded cheeks with the soft, peachy bloom of sleep, and her brown hair was clustered, with warm moisture, into a circle of bewitching little rings about her temples.
But, despite the one fault in which he had been detected, Miss Foss decided that the oftentioned girls and the young gentlemen, their traveling-dress was unexceptionally plain but stylish; and the owner of the guilty, deep, liquid eyes, was a man of exceeding beauty; something above the medium height, with complexion, golden hair, and long, fair drooping mustaches, in contrast to his brown eyes, and darkly-defined brows, and fringe-like lashes, that one easily guessed him to inherit the characteristics and nature of two nationalities. From the moment Bethel's eyes ran over his handsome form, the whole aristocratic hand with which he stroked his yellow mustaches, and the perfectly chiseled beauty of his blonde face, she unreservedly admitted him to be the handsomest man she had ever seen. His age she could not attempt to decide; and she turned to scrutinize his companion—a younger, shorter, darker man, with a pleasant but rather massive face, and a mouth in whose expression sweetness and shyness were as clearly defined as a woman's.
"Max," said the younger man, "is it not time you were gathering up these traps? We shall be in the depot in five minutes, now."
"I suppose so," answered the gentleman addressed as Max, indolently bestirring himself to gather up the books and papers and crowd them into his coat pocket and satchel. "I'll put yours in with mine. You must come with me to-night, my boy."
"Oh, it is not worth while," dissented his companion.
"Yes it is. We will drive to the Brunswick and get a good supper, which will be a jolly treat after knocking about in a half-civilized country so long; and there will be no sense in your going further than my rooms, after." And as the train slackened speed, and swept under the arches of the great depot, the gentleman resumed his high hat, flung his satchel carelessly over his shoulder, and, with a quick, half-curious glance at Bethel, followed his friend toward the forward door.
"Jack," he exclaimed, as they swung themselves down from the still moving train, "I'd like to know why that very pretty girl is traveling alone. By the way," he added, suddenly, "I am half inclined to keep my eye upon her, until I see her safe under some one's care. Walk a little slower."

So the gentlemen nearly halted, and kept watch of the stream of passengers, until Bethel passed them, looking very tired, and troubled, and something nervous. She was still without an escort, but there was such a quiet dignity about her that the gentlemen who were watching her never thought of addressing her, as she made her way to the street where she looked about in evident perplexity.
"Carriage, miss! Carriage?" clamored a dozen persistent cabmen; but the young lady shrunk from them, and espying a policeman walked swiftly toward him. The two gentlemen who were following her were near enough to catch her low inquiry.
"Which way is Fifth avenue? I am a little bewildered."
"That," said the policeman, tersely, with a slight wave of his hand. He did not give much heed to the young lady. His attention was engaged by a foppishly-dressed man who had emerged from the depot and stood upon the walk swinging a cane and watching the various passengers.
"That chap belongs to the light-fingered gentry," remarked the policeman, to himself. "I wonder what job he is looking for?" But when the "chap" in question crossed Forty-second street and took his way to the westward, the policeman allowed his further interest in him to become passive.
"The lady cannot be going far," said the gentleman who had been called Jack, when he heard Bethel's question regarding Fifth avenue. "Suppose we take a carriage to the café, and tell caddy to drive slowly? We can watch her just as well."
"All right," assented his friend; and presently, from the open carriage window, they were watching the lonely young lady, who, having reached the broad thoroughfare, seemed sure of her way and walked swiftly and confidently. The street was well lighted, and the moon, too, shone brightly; so that when the graceful figure turned into Forty-first street, glancing up at the numbers of the houses, Max replied to the driver's inquiry as to whether he should turn aside from the avenue.
"Oh, no; it is not worth while; drive on! And good-by, pretty one," he added, laughingly apostrophizing Bethel from the carriage window, as the driver gave the whip to the horses. "I must confess I should not like a sister of mine to be wandering around this way."

CHAPTER VIII. THE LOST LAMB.

"Full well the busy whisper, circling round,
Convey'd the dismal tidings."
WITHIN the memory of the inhabitants of Greenwilde, there had never been a funeral so largely attended, as regarded congregation, nor so slightly, as regarded mourners, as was the funeral of Mrs. Foss.
In all country villages, but, perhaps, most of all in a New England village, ill-news and scandal travel with almost telegraphic swiftness. While one vainly speculates as to how tidings can so soon be disseminated among a population necessarily spending the greater part of its time upon household and business occupations, and where there is no town-crier, nor even a morning nor evening paper, the fact still remains that in some wonderfully rapid manner the intelligence has traveled the length and breadth of the township.
So it was upon the day the parson's wife was to be buried. Every one in Greenwilde had heard of Bethel Foss's strange disappearance—her rumored elopement upon the night preceding her mother's funeral. In fact, every one knew, and according to their own assertions, had known all along, of her infatuation for the dark, wealthy stranger, who had been staying at the Mansion House. Wise Greenwilde shook its head, and remarked, sagely, that it had always thought

that the affair would end in this way; Bethel Foss had been spoiled by indulgence; it hoped the parson could realize that fact now; what a good thing it was that his wife had died before this disgraceful occurrence. Greenwilde knew, too, though the knowledge must have come to it with surprising suddenness, that Bethel's conduct had helped to kill her mother; Mrs. Foss had grieved herself to death over her daughter's self-willed preference for Andral, and the shameful way in which she had treated Harry Sewall; for somehow, it had been an accepted fact, since Bethel had worn the shortest dresses and Harry had first donned long trousers, that these two were to "make a match." And after all this iniquity on Bethel's part, to think of her deserting her poor father and going to the city, alone, at night, to meet her lover, by appointment, and sail with him for Europe in the morning! There was nothing concerning the movements of the parson's daughter which Greenwilde did not assume to know, and did not consider itself bound to criticize!
The preparations for the burial of Mrs. Foss had gone too far to be delayed even in the face of Bethel's dreadful absence; and every one was curious to attend this funeral, where there would be but one mourner, and to see how the good parson would look and act under the double calamity that had befallen him. As the hour of service approached the church was thronged—not only with a sad and sympathizing audience, sincerely mourning the death of a gentle, benevolent lady, but with a curious, eager, gossiping crowd, as well; and when the awesome tolling of the bell announced that the funeral cortege had left the parsonage, and was wending its way toward the church, an air of expectancy was evinced, equal to that with which the audience at a fashionable wedding awaits the coming of the full-dressed bride. Presently the clergyman, who had been summoned from a neighboring village to officiate, appeared at the church door, open book in hand, and advanced up the aisle reading aloud a portion of the solemn burial service. Following him came the funeral train; and a hardly suppressed bustle passed over the congregation, and necks were eagerly craned to see who followed the coffin to the seat reserved for the mourners.
Perhaps, after all, Miss Foss had returned to attend her mother's funeral. But—no! Only the parson, and just behind him the faithful Jemima, walked slowly after the pall-bearers! Meaning glances were sent from eye to eye, and to the Greenwilde population the parson's daughter was Bethel Foss no longer; but Mrs. Rial Andral.
The funeral services were lengthy and impressive; and over Mrs. Foss's coffin, down upon the fragile hands, clasped tranquilly above the peaceful breast, many sorrowful tears were dropped, beside those shed by her husband and Miss Pierce. But, despite much sincere mourning, there were strange whisperings during that period of confusion that generally occurs, at a village funeral, while the audience is looking its last on the face of the dead, and repairing to the carriages; and this time, not Bethel's name, alone, was the theme of conversation. Rumors were repeated in which the parson himself was strangely mentioned; and had he not been so wrapped in grief, he might have detected some oddly-critical and even contemptuous glances cast upon him as he passed. But if Mr. Foss failed to see the curious regard of which he was the object, Jemima's eyes were more keen. Under her breath, she whispered:
"The gamin' idiots! It's a pity these ain't Bible days and the good Lord warn't here with his whip, to drive them all about their business! I wonder they ain't got the common sense to know the poor man has enough to bear, without their a-garin' at him just to see how bad he feels consarnin' Mis' Foss's death, and whether he believes them trumpley lies they're tellin' 'bout Beth! Of course he don't! No more do I, and I'll tell 'em so, mighty quick, if they say anything to me about it! Bethel run off to get married the night after her mother's death, in deed! She's never done it in the world, as I told that sneakin' Mis' Jarvis. There's the varmint, now, a-puttin' on such a sorrowful face, when no doubt she's tellin' every one all she knows, and a little more, too, about our house!"
And Jemima was not so far wrong. No person could ever repeat precisely what Mrs. Jarvis had told, nor, indeed, could the report be traced back entirely to her as its originator; but, certainly, by the time the bereaved husband and his faithful housekeeper were once more at home, and Mr. Foss was anxiously conversing with a couple of his deacons, who had been acting in his behalf in tracing Beth, there was afloat in Greenwilde still more exciting gossip, than that of the morning, concerning the family at the parsonage.
"Then you have really no news for me?" asked the desolate clergyman of the deacons.
"Very little, brother Foss," answered Deacon Strick. "Without doubt Miss Foss took the express, last night, to New York. Miles Haines is sure of it. She came running up the hill, from this way, just in time to get the train, and she had on such clothes as your Jemima said she wore, with a thick veil tied over her face. Haines helped her into the cars and he thought then 'twas her; and when she dropped her pocketbook, and called out, and he picked it up for her, he knew her voice."
The parson leaned his face wearily upon his hand.
"Is that all? Surely you have telegraphed?"
"Oh, yes," said Deacon Peck. "We have telegraphed to the Police Department and to the Andral chap."
"Oh, she has never gone to meet him!" asserted the father, momentarily raising his head with energy.
"Well, brother Foss, that's the light in which you look at it," commenced Deacon Strick, dictatorially; "but other folks must be allowed their views on such a subject, and it's pretty generally known that Miss Foss and that Andral chap were considerably sweet on each other. He paid her more attention than any other young woman, at all the picnics and goings on, and made all the opportunities he could for walking with her; and Sam Travers, the postmaster's clerk, saw them out riding together, the very night that Mrs. Foss died; and

then it looks rather suspicious, you see, that the next morning she went to the hotel to see him, and when he wasn't there got his address; and Thorne's folks know all about that."

"I can't believe it—I can't believe it!" murmured the father, though he saw how dreadfully facts told against Beth. But Deacon Strict proceeded, inflexibly.

"The fellow had gone away that morning, and on his way to the cars posted a letter to Miss Foss. Sam Travers stamped it. Presently in comes Harry Sewall, and says he'll bring up your mail, and so fetches her that very letter."

The parson groaned. He was thinking, now, of that other fateful letter Harry had brought him, and scarcely heeded Deacon Strict's closing words.

"So, you see, there ain't no much doubt, in most folks' mind, as to where Miss Foss has gone."

"But we'll do all we can for you, brother Foss," remarked Deacon Peck, kindly; "we'll let you know the moment we get any further news—a messenger from the police or Andral."

"I wonder if I had better go to New York myself?" suggested Mr. Foss, irresolutely, at first.

"It won't do no good," announced brother Strict, decidedly.

But the clergyman made up his mind, quite regardless of the advice of this prominent member of his flock.

"Indeed, I must go! I must go!" he said, getting up and walking the floor, nervously. "I can catch the express, and if any one can find Bethel I can! I will tell Jimma to pack my sachel immediately."

Deacon Strict was severely silent; but Deacon Peck remarked, soothingly:

"I don't know, after all, but it's the best thing you can do, parson. It may take your mind off your other affliction; and who knows but what, after all, as you say, you're the best one to find your daughter. You'll get home in time for the official meeting, Saturday night?"

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Foss, excitedly, as the deacons rose to depart.

That night Jimma was left to indulge her grief by herself, and to keep the parsonage free from intruders. While Mr. Foss, being whirled toward the great city, had ample opportunity, as Bethel had had under similar circumstances, to review the startling events that had followed each other so rapidly within the past forty-eight hours.

But, unlike his daughter, though suffering from severe mental and physical exhaustion, his less youthful and buoyant constitution found no relief in sleep. So, thinking busily, his mind dwelt upon the remarkable fate which had given back to Bethel a mother just at the time when she had lost one; and again he wondered, as he had in those first moments of wild apprehension at Bethel's flight, if it could be possible that his daughter had seen and been influenced by the letter from the lawyers, relating to Madame De Witt—as that lady still preferred to call herself, in consideration of her long abandonment of married ties. Though Mr. Foss would fain have dismissed this suggestion as indignantly as, to his friends, he had dismissed the one relating to Beth's elopement, he felt that both theories must receive a practical examination at his hands; and he determined that his first act, upon arriving in the city, should be to answer the letter he had received from Tremaine and Merritt, and demand of them any knowledge they might have of Beth's whereabouts.

From the conductor he received an identification of Bethel and the assurance that she had journeyed to New York. Arriving at Grand Central Depot he hoped to obtain some clew to her movements; but, gaining none from the night officials, as he strode out upon the walk he bethought him of inquiring of the policeman.

That protector of the public peace, after evident earnest cogitations, failed to recollect having seen any such young woman upon the previous night as the gentleman described.

"But," remarked the M. P., "you might ask the cabbies. If some chap met her, they'd be most likely to take a conveyance."

Mr. Foss turned to prosecute some inquiries in that line, when the policeman's memory suddenly revived.

"See here, mister!" he said, arresting the parson with a tap upon the shoulder. "I believe I've struck the very young woman, now. Tall, with a quiet sort of voice, and a traveling-cloak, but no baggage?"

Mr. Foss nodded.

"Then there ain't no use your asking the cabs. She came up to me, and asked the way to Fifth avenue, and walked off, right smart, alone. I had my eye upon a suspicious-looking chap, at the time, and that's what made me forget the young woman; but I remember, now, she went off alone."

And the policeman sauntered away, leaving Mr. Foss to cross over to the Grand Union Hotel, where, before throwing himself upon the bed in the room assigned him, the clergyman indited a letter to Messrs. Tremaine and Merritt.

CHAPTER IX.

A FATHER'S GRIEF.

"Nothing's so hard but search will find it out."

"You have news for me?"

It was Cecile De Witt who asked the question, advancing to her visitor with extended, welcoming hand—graceful, elegant, as always, but eager, and with an odd little flame of color flickering, like the light of a camp-fire, in the deep shadows of her eyes.

The gentleman whom she addressed was the head of the law firm who had undertaken the management of her affairs; and the unusually early hour at which he had presented himself, coupled with the very fact that he had come in person, instead of sending her a message, had excited Madame De Witt with the hope that he had some important communication for her.

Mr. Tremaine took the seat to which his client motioned him, while she sunk with languid bewitching motion into a great satin chair near.

"A little, madam," he replied, courteously, "but nothing as yet that you will care to hear."

"You do not mean?" she trifled anxiously—"that Mr. Foss has refused to allow any intercourse between myself and our daughter?"

He has, I suppose, that power until she is of age; but by the laws of this State a young woman attains her majority at eighteen, does she not? He cannot interfere with our meeting long."

"You are jumping altogether too rapidly at conclusions, madam," said the lawyer, with a smile which seemed to add—but that is a woman's way. "Mr. Foss is in town, and has written us; but not in regard to giving his daughter to your guardianship."

"He wishes an interview, then, with me," suggested madame, with a slight drooping of her tones, but no other perceptible change of manner, to indicate what might be her feelings at the prospect of meeting the husband from whom she had been absent so long.

"No, madam; if Mr. Foss desires an interview with you he certainly did not communicate any such wish to us. He announces that his daughter has suddenly, and mysteriously, left her home, and asks if we can give him any clew to her whereabouts. He is, I think, suspicious that the event may have occurred through our, or your, agency."

And the lawyer paused and glanced intently into Cecile's face.

A charmingly soft and appealing light came to the lady's eyes, and a pleasant little rippling laugh to her lips.

"I think you, Mr. Tremaine, will exonerate me from all blame in this matter. The idea of obtaining the society of my daughter, except with her own and her father's full consent, has never occurred to me. As my confidential friend and agent, you are fully acquainted with every step I have taken in this matter, since all have been directed through your suggestion and advice."

"Then, perhaps, it is as well for me to see Mr. Foss, and disabuse his mind of any idea that you are in the least cognizant of his daughter's movements. Do you care to see his note?"

brought it with me, thinking it might possibly be of interest to you."

"I would like to see it, yes; I do not quite understand about Bethel's disappearance."

"Nor will you gain much information through this," said Mr. Tremaine, as he handed his companion the note.

Madame De Witt withdrew the document from its wrapper, with just a trifling nervous tremor at holding in her hand a communication direct from the man who had once been her husband, and the slight, but not the slightest, most imperceptible, betrayal of her sensibility with a feeling something akin to admiration.

"How wonderfully that woman holds herself in hand, when she chooses," he said, mentally; "yet what a finely passionate nature she has. As an actress she ought to have been a great success; and Mr. Tremaine—who was partial to all real talent in the histrionic art—almost felt that Madame De Witt had done the world an injustice when she had deserted the stage to devote herself to dull years with an invalid father."

But excellent lawyer and man as he was, he failed to take into consideration that oftentimes the greatest genius of the real actor is displayed upon the broad stage of life.

"My poor little Bethel! Of what account for this strange disappearance, Mr. Tremaine?" Bethel's mother asked, toying with Mr. Foss's letter when she had finished the perusal of it, and betraying a great deal of tender solicitude.

"Only upon the most grounds, which, strange absences and flights of young ladies of that age may often be accounted for."

Madame De Witt darted the lawyer a swift glance.

"I hope," she remarked, quietly, "that my daughter is not contemplating mother's folly."

"I beg your pardon," cried Mr. Tremaine, with real warmth and earnestness. "I hope you will be so gracious as to believe that I had forgotten your own unfortunate history, and had not the slightest idea of your daughter's following in the footsteps of her mother."

"I shall believe what you wish me to," said his client, with her usual charming grace; "but I cannot forget that I deserve the reproach which your words seemed to convey; and you can imagine how terribly should depress my daughter's following in the footsteps of her mother."

"I trust that you will not be disappointed, madam," the lawyer responded, warmly, as he arose to go. Then he continued, in a more business-like way: "Is there any other message that you wish me to convey to Mr. Foss?"

Madame hesitated. "Perhaps, if he desires an interview relating to the proposal I made concerning my daughter, you would arrange to have it take place at your office, or, at least, in your presence, since it must, of necessity, be somewhat trying to both of us; and say that we will do all in our power to learn something concerning Bethel's disappearance."

The lawyer promised in every way to consult Madame De Witt's interests as to the coming interview, and hastened to meet the former husband of his fair client. But he found less to accomplish at this visit than he had anticipated.

At as early an hour as he had deemed it all practicable Mr. Foss had dispatched his hurriedly-written note to the office of Tremaine and Merritt, and then had started out to follow up that other clew to Bethel's disappearance, in favor of the probability of which the Greenwilde people had addressed so many facts.

He had taken care to obtain the address of Rial Andral; and it was to number—West Forty-first street, that he took his way, immediately upon finishing his light breakfast.

When he mounted the broad flight of stone steps that led to number—West Forty-first street, a minute, aghast, and overcome by a host of unpleasant recollections. Recovering himself, he rung the bell, and inquired of the waiting maid who answered his summons, for Mr. Rial Andral.

"He sailed for Europe yesterday," replied the servant, with a stare of surprise.

The stranger returned her glance, vacantly, for a moment, as he questioned her, and then whether it could indeed be possible that Bethel, too, was now miles away upon the ocean.

"But the elder Mr. Andral, he is in?" Then, receiving an affirmative assurance—"Please tell him that a gentleman waits to speak to him upon important business."

"Your name, sir?"

"Never mind the name. I will detain him but a minute."

The visitor was shown into a reception-room, presently along the softly-carpeted hall, and into the clergyman's presence, came the man he had met once before—the man who, years ago, had villainously deserted Cecile De Witt.

As quickly as the clergyman, who was, to a degree, prepared for the meeting, recognized the swarthy West Indian, did Mr. Andral, perhaps by some innate perception, rather than by his merely physical senses, remember the man who rose to greet him; though grief and time had set wrinkles upon Daniel Foss's face and silver lines in his hair and beard.

"You are surprised, Mr. Andral," said the clergyman, with quiet, sorrowful dignity, "that I should seek your presence. I have come, sir, in no connection with the past, but to ascertain whether you could have the least my daughter into a terrible folly and wrong."

It was a frowning face that looked into Mr. Foss's, and a hard, unconciliatory voice that answered:

"I cannot profess to be in ignorance of your movements, but I can only say that I have not seen you since the day you left the village where he has been stopping, in which was mentioned the disappearance of a Bethel Foss, daughter of a clergyman of that place, who it was supposed had eloped with the very man who stood before me."

"It was supposed?" cried Mr. Foss, eagerly. "Then it is not so?"

A half-smiling smile broke over the West Indian's face, and a diabolical light shone, momentarily and furtively, in his dusky eyes.

"I cannot say," he replied, "that I have not taken place," returned the West Indian, grimly.

"Indeed it seems most probable; for when my son returned from Greenwilde, he informed me that he was betrothed to your daughter. Finding that I had some business to transact in this morning, I hurriedly left him, and he was certainly persuaded her to this step."

Mr. Foss's face grew ghastly white.

"You say you do not doubt but that my daughter has eloped with your son; is this surely founded upon a knowledge of his movements?"

"I know that he went to the steamship company's office immediately upon reaching town, though I had engaged his passage, saying that he should not sail until Saturday, unless he found that he could have the entire steamer room."

"This was fixed to his satisfaction, I concluded, when he bade the family good-by upon Wednesday evening. The steamer was to sail quite early in the morning; and he remarked that no one need rise on his account, as he should not breakfast at home. Remembering these facts, when I received the telegram from Greenwilde, I felt, as I have said, no doubt but that he had made arrangements to take his betrothed with him. Rial was not the person to consult any one regarding such a whim, and he was certainly eminently capable of accomplishing it, if he had determined upon it."

"Bethel! Bethel!" exclaimed Mr. Foss, piteously, as he found himself forced to accept Mr. Andral's statements and beliefs. "My poor girl, what have you done?"

"I cannot see," remarked Mr. Andral, coldly, "that Miss Foss has committed any very terrible crime; or even any great folly. My son is a gentleman, sir, and was honorably in love with

your daughter; and I fail to understand why they should not marry when they chose, or why their marriage should be regarded in the light of an unhappy event."

"There are many reasons why our views may differ upon that subject," returned Mr. Foss, gravely; "and neither of us can care to discuss it; and their interview having ended, the deserted and desolate father made his way slowly back to his hotel, thinking how much surer had been the judgment of his parishioners than his own perceptions, blinded as they were by a great love."

And so, when Mr. Tremaine gained an interview with Mr. Foss, he found him nearly overcome by his accumulated griefs, and already prepared for a return to the quiet country parsonage, within whose walls he longed to hide himself and his sorrows. To the lawyer's proposal that Mr. Foss should meet Madame De Witt, the clergyman shrunk in nervous alarm.

He was not able, he said, to sustain the excitement of such an ordeal, nor did he consider it necessary, now that Bethel had taken her future into her own hands and none of those who cared for her could do aught toward changing it.

"But, in case," persisted the lawyer, "your daughter returns to her home, or matters prove to be otherwise than they now appear, would you consent that she should make the acquaintance of her mother, and, as Madame De Witt's helms, spend most, or at least a portion of her time, in the home madame is about to establish in this city?"

"Nothing can be different from what it is," returned the parson, drearily; "but if Bethel had stayed with me, I certainly should not have let her go, right or wrong, nor interfere with what in your opinion, and mine, upon mutual consultation, seemed for her best good."

And with that assurance the lawyer was forced to go away content, while Mr. Foss started upon his return to his parish.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 488.)

REJECTED LOVE.

BY W. R. M.

We stood alone by the river side—
We stood alone by the river side;
I fondly hoped she'd be my bride,
As I whispered, "I love you."

The river breezes softly fanned
My flushed and burning brow,
And the delicate touch of her quivering hand—
I almost feel it now.

She neither moved nor said a word
To break the waking dream;
I gazed upon her most absurd;
She gazed upon the stream.

At last she spoke: "I watched her eyes—
Her eyes of brilliant blue—
That burned bright with a passionate light
As she cried, 'I don't love you!'"

One of Life's Histories.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

A SOLITAIRE diamond, in whose faithless heart gleamed and fretted a thousand prisoned glories of hue, set high in a chased band of gold, and circling a slender brunette forefinger at which Florence was looking with all her happy heart in her bonny brown eyes.

Such a sweet face Florence's was as she stood there in the open window with the June sunlight flooding goldenly about her, bringing out all the satin smoothness of her clear brunette complexion, all the girlish freshness of her face with its clear brown eyes so happy, so tender, so smiling, sensitive mouth, that was like a crimson rosebud cleft in twain, all the favorable grace of her supple, willowy figure.

And so early in her quiet young life her happiness had come to her, so soon had her prince come to take her captive, and she was so glad, so glad, so perfectly, utterly content that it should be so, for she knew she loved Ernest Howell with genuine love, she knew no one could ever come after him.

Just now, she stood among the early red roses that climbed around the window, watching the sunshine that awoke a thousand glorious fires of color under the icy crystal of her diamond, her glad young heart was beating in tumultuous ecstasies as she tried to realize the dream that had met her on the threshold of her life.

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nothing, nothing which can make me—not love you."

"My faithful little love! When I have told you the story of one year of my life, its folly, its result, God send you will repeat your sweet assurance. Kiss me, Florrie, once, just once, yourself, before I tell you."

An almost saintly look came into her face, and she gave him her warm, pulsing lips to his upturned forehead, where her kiss touched like a breath of fragrant zephyr, and lay like a benediction of peace and hope and courage.

Ernest began, gravely, bravely, with her eyes on his beloved face.

"I am twenty years older than you, my little one, so that you were a tiny girl when I committed a madly rash act, the result of hot-headed, boyish foolishness. Florence, I imagined myself in love with a blue-eyed, yellow-haired girl, whose name was Jessie May, and I married her, to find out a few months later, that she was not such a woman as an honest man—even if he is rash and hot-headed, wants for his wife. Florrie, my pure little priestess—she was not a good woman, and I left her and never in all the years after that I wore the fetters my folly had forged on me, did I hear of her until I learned, a year ago, of her death in a foreign country. What I have endured, and suffered, God only knows. It was like a load of iron, my neck—but, thank Heaven, she died and left me a chance for hope and happiness, and—yes, my blessed, my precious, Florrie, Florrie, if you can help it, don't despise me, don't!"

He broke down—this strong, proud man, this grand, honorable man who preferred to endure the degradation of confession to this saintly-faced girl, to take his risk of her forgiveness, rather than deceive her.

Then his hands fluttered carelessly to his hair, where occasional silver threads gleamed among the fair brown locks, and she stooped and touched his lips with hers.

"Never mind, dear. Let me try to atone for all she did. I have a perfect right to you—God gave me the right and the privilege and the happiness when He took her. Ernest—dear! Can I not help you forget all you have suffered?"

And with his arms once more around her, he felt that he would have suffered a thousand-fold more in those dark days of the past for the sake of the bliss of the present, and the sweet promise of the future.

Those intervening days went by like some dream of enchantment, and the bonniest of all months in the year, golden-gloried September, brought the wedding-day of these two lovers who were all the world to each other.

Often and often Florence had wondered what could be the reason she was so perfectly happy and content beyond what other women were often told herself it was almost wrong to be so entirely satisfied with her lot, and more than once, would be overwhelmed with sharp fear lest, because she was so exquisitely happy, there would come a terrible trouble, he in store, according to the natural law of compensation.

Ernest used to laugh at her fears—delightedly, because it showed him so plainly how well she loved him.

"Nothing can happen, my darling, can there?"

Then Florrie would smile through the threatening tears, and say to herself nothing could happen.

So the wedding-day came, and nothing had happened, and the glad autumn sun shone on the bride's fair face, and Ernest had taken her in his strong arms close to his fast-beating heart, and she had heard him whisper in tones that set every pulse throbbing:

"My wife, my precious wife," and then—
Florence had gone to her own room to change her wedding toilet for her traveling-dress—the happiest woman in all the wide world, with fairest visions of her future life as Ernest Howell's wife dancing alluringly before her, as with many a dimpling smile and happy tear she thanked God for what had at last come to her.

Some one tapped on her door, a maid with a message.

"Mr. Howell's compliments, and would she see him at a moment—particularly, in the library?"

She wondered a little, then went quietly down the back stairs into the library, where Ernest stood in the middle of the room, so deathly white, his hands so tremulous, as she saw the calamity that a gasp of fear was on her lips as she went up to him.

"Ernest! Oh, Ernest, what is it?"

He staggered toward her, as if the sweet, terrified tones of her voice made him realize the terrible trouble that had met him on the threshold of his new beautiful life.

"Florrie, little Florrie—oh, my God, to think I have lost you! Oh, my love, my pure little love!"

She clung to him in vague sense of anguish, all her pulses beating in dim fear.

"Lost me, dear? I am not lost to you; I am here to comfort you in whatever has happened. Tell me, Ernest, my husband."

It was the first time she had spoken the sweet name, and her tone was rich with unspeakable tenderness of pride and love. He shrunk as if a heavy load had been dealt him.

"My God, spare me! What awful sin have I ever done that I should suffer this, that she should have left me!"

She looked at him with whitening lips. What did he mean? Then almost roughly, in his awful grief, he thrust her woe in her face.

"Florence—you are not

"Not yet, sir: do you see those cliffs?" and the youth pointed to the overhanging rocky walls of the channel.

"Yes; what of them?"

"Did you search them when you were here before?"

"No, there was no means of reaching them."

"You are mistaken, sir. Upon the right cliff the pilot beacon that guided you last night was lighted."

"You are right. Well, what of that?"

"Upon both of those cliffs are mounted heavy guns."

"Impossible! boy, you cannot frighten by threats."

"I tell you the truth, sir—there is a strong armament up there, and brave men to man the guns."

"Nonsense."

"Captain Markham, I will prove my words; lend me your trumpet."

The boy took the speaking-trumpet and hailed:

"Ho! the cliff!"

"Ay, ay—on board the Sea Hawk!" came back from the top of the cliff.

"Send a broadside against yonder wooded hill!" again shouted the boy.

Instantly there flashed forth from the summits of both of the cliffs a dozen bursts of red flame, and a dozen roars commingled, while as many iron messengers sped howling above the topmasts of the Sea Hawk, and went crashing into the timber upon the hill-side.

Every face on that deck then paled. No, there were not the flames—the youth's with pride, at proving his power, Mabel's with hope that Rafael would yet go free.

"Boy, you have spoken the truth; but those guns are for vessels coming into the basin."

"You are mistaken, sir. They command the Sea Hawk where she now is, and can send a plunging fire upon her as she runs out of the channel and keep her in range for half a league. Will you release Rafael and his men now?"

"I will not; I will run the gantlet going out, and string up to the yard-arm a dozen of your vile crew to prove I am in earnest."

But the youth was not daunted by the savage threat, for he quickly replied:

"Captain Markham, you lost a favorite lieutenant some time since?"

"Do you refer to Bancroft Edmunds?" asked the officer, eagerly.

"I do, sir."

"Know you aught of him?"

"Yes."

"Is he alive?"

"He is."

"Where?"

"On the island, and in the power of the buccaneers."

"Good God! can this be true?"

"It is so true, sir, that if heaven befalls Captain Markham, the life of Bancroft Edmunds shall at once be forfeit."

Captain Markham dropped his head. The youth again held the vantage.

"Would you do this crime?" he suddenly asked.

"Ay, would I! If Rafael the Rover dies, Lieutenant Edmunds's death shall follow in the same manner! I swear it, Captain Markham."

"The one is an outlaw—a cruel corsair—the other an honored officer of the navy of the United States—"

"They both are men; life is as dear to one as to the other. Will you exchange prisoners, Captain Markham? for I now hold the winning hand!"

"No, sir; that is, I will take my men and rescue poor Edmunds—"

"And I will give the signal to have the Sea Hawk sunk where she lies! Will you exchange prisoners, I again ask, sir?"

"I will not, sir."

"Then it shall be a life for a life."

Captain Markham was silent; he felt that he was in a trap, and he knew not what to say.

A seaman approached at this moment and said:

"The Rover asks to see you, sir—"

"Bring him here," and then, turning to Lieutenant Redmond he said, in a low tone:

"We are in a scrape, Redmond."

"Yes, sir; but the buccaneer should not escape."

"But poor Edmunds!"

"Even if he dies, sir, the Rover should not escape."

"Lieutenant Redmond is anxious for promotion at any cost; he would step into Lieutenant Edmunds's shoes."

"It was Mabel, who spoke, in cold, sneering tones, and her words cut deep, for Ross Redmond had made up his mind to try and win the maiden for himself.

The youth heard the remarks, and a smile on his lips proved that he appreciated the situation.

At this moment two marines approached, Rafael the Rover, heavily ironed, walking proudly between them.

"Captain Markham, through the open hatchway I heard all that has passed, and I came up to see if I could not arrange a compromise," and Rafael glanced fixedly at the youth, a strange light in his eyes.

The youth met the look, blushed like a young girl, and bent down his gaze.

"What terms would you wish to make as a compromise, Sir Buccaneer?" haughtily said Captain Markham.

"Your vessel is in danger, sir. My island guns, as this—this youth has said, command you, and there is force enough on shore, I tell you frankly, to force you to accept my terms. I attempt to make, while you could not run out of here without a most experienced pilot."

"I will offer his life and gold to any man who will be my pilot."

"No man will accept the terms, sir."

"What do you mean to say that your buccaneer crew have such a high sense of honor that they will not accept the terms I offer?"

"It is just what I said, sir. They are below: call them up and try them," indifferently said Rafael.

"By Heaven! I'll do it! Mr. Redmond, have those sea-outcasts brought on deck," angrily ordered Captain Markham, while Rafael the Rover calmly glanced shoreward, an unfathomable look in his dark, sad eyes.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE ENVOY.

WHEN Luis Ramirez sprung into the sea, he took the desperate chances between life and death—and he won life.

When the waves ingulfed him, he felt himself drawn under by the hull of the Sea Hawk; but a strong swimmer, he managed to gain the surface and, boldly struck out for the shore, which he reached in safety, though greatly fatigued.

Yet, without rest, he hurried on to the hills, and by the same route taken by Rafael on his visit to the cavern, he reached the rocky chamber, glided through it morosely, cursing back those who crowded around him, and stood before the old chief.

"Well, Ramirez, from whence come you?" asked the chief, eagerly.

"From the sea."

"Is at the bottom?"

"I am at the bottom."

"Maledictions! did they sink her?"

"No; the lightning struck her—set her on fire, and we took to our boats."

"And the men are with you?"

"No, I am alone. We went on board the Sea Hawk to keep from drowning."

"Curses and furies! and why is it you are here?"

"My story is soon told: the tornado swept over us the Sea Hawk I mean; we were driving directly on the island, and we were released to save the vessel."

"Why, where was my son, man?"

"He was aboard, too; he directed of course; none other could have brought the vessel in in such a blow and wild sea."

"Released, you say; why, was he discovered?"

"Yes; some of the crew betrayed him as soon

as they came on board, and he was ironed with the rest of us."

"Oh, curses! curses! He will die."

"Yes, he will be taken to Havana," coolly said the Spaniard.

"And you—how did you escape, señor Spaniard?"

"I stood at the wheel with Captain Rafael and Woodbridge, and not wishing to take the chances of being pardoned for our services, I sprung overboard into the sea, as soon as we were in the basin, and swam ashore."

"You were right—why did not Rafael and the others follow your brave example?"

"Captain Rafael is too honorable to be a pirate. He preferred to wait and trust in being pardoned, I suppose," sneered Ramirez.

"That will never be; he will be hung—nay, he will be broken on the wheel, for I have been condemned to that fate—I and my officers, while the men will be *garoté*; but this must not be. You say the vessel is now in the basin?" and the old chief sprang to his feet with nervous energy.

"She is; and by this time Rafael and the crew are again in irons."

"He shall not die—never! Salvador, go to the further cliff, with a crew of a dozen men, to man the guns there. Ramirez, you take as many men with you to the nearer cliff, and see that the guns are ready for immediate action. I will retain the remainder of my band to attack landing-parties, and I'll yet bring Walter Markham to terms. His vessel may sail, but he must remain behind! Though hiding in holes, the Island Buccaneers are not dead yet," and the old chief spoke with a resolution that proved he intended carrying the war to the enemy's very deck.

"Señor chief, can I speak to you?"

"Well, Nellie, what have you to say? If not connected with our present trouble, put it off," said the old man, as the maiden stood before him.

"I would ask, señor chief, to be allowed to go on board the Sea Hawk, and—"

"Give him another hold upon us? Oh, no, girl!"

"I mean to go under flag of truce, señor. I think I can make a proposal to him that will gain the release of Captain Rafael and his men."

"The girl is mad, like her mother," said the chief.

"No, señor; I am not mad, and I can prove it. I have a means of bringing Captain Markham to terms you cannot suspect."

"Name it!"

"I cannot, sir; but I ask you to trust me in this matter. To negotiate you will have to send some one on board, so let it be me."

"You are but a girl."

"And yet a girl has had great power, señor. In some cases, but I will not go as a woman; I will go in man's attire. Please let me be your envoy."

"Well, get yourself ready, and when the morning comes, I will talk more with you about it, for you seem strangely earnest in your request."

"I am, señor, and I do believe good will come of it; but I dare not now tell you what power I hold to aid in the release of Captain Rafael and his men."

"Well, you shall go. Now I must arrange my plans. Salvador, have every able-bodied man assemble in the large cavern," and the chief beckoned to his belt of arms, and placed upon his back his boarding-cap, the same which he had worn in many a desperate struggle upon a blood-stained deck.

In half an hour the buccaneers were all assembled, three score and ten in the large cavern, and in a few words the chief made known to them all that had happened, and the perilous position of Captain Rafael and his men, in irons on the Sea Hawk.

Then he continued:

"Men, that vessel must not sail with our comrades on board; we must bring them to terms, for our companions have saved the ship and her crew."

"Salvador, select your men and go to your post. Ramirez, you do likewise, and I will lead the remainder of my band—hold! we must first agree upon signals; but who have we here?"

All started as a stranger entered their presence, and every hand sought a weapon, for they believed that they had been betrayed—that their foes were upon them.

"Hold! it is I—Pretty Nellie," cried the stranger, and the old chief exclaimed:

"By Heaven, girl, you are so changed your mad mother would not know you. Why, you are a perfect-looking boy, and will make a splendid envoy."

The maiden bowed. The signals for action were arranged, and the maiden, still refusing to tell the secret power she held over Captain Markham, set out for the shore, where she was to remain concealed from those on the Sea Hawk, until she beheld her comrades in position.

An hour thus passed; daylight came, and the sun arose; and the girl, who had been waiting to go on board, and she boldly walked down to the beach and hailed the Sea Hawk.

The reader will now see that the fearless young envoy, who confronted Captain Markham upon his own deck, was none other than Pretty Nellie, the Queen of the Isle, as she was called by the buccaneers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE COMPROMISE.

TEN minutes after the order of Captain Markham the buccaneers were ranged on deck, Roy Woodbridge taking his place near Rafael.

In their faces shone a ray of hope, for they believed after all they had done for the sloop that they might be pardoned.

"Outlaws," began Captain Markham, "your chief has led me into a trap here; his guns command the sloop with plunging shots, and he has a force on shore, and one of my officers in the power of those on the island, so you see he holds a strong advantage, though himself a prisoner."

"Now his crimes, and yours, have made you outlaws on sea and land, and you should not expect mercy; but I am willing to give not only my liberty, but one thousand dollars in gold to the buccaneers, who wish to see me free, for I will put to sea, in spite of the guns on the cliff. Now who is the man that will accept his life on such terms?"

The men looked at each other, and none spoke for some minutes; then one asked:

"Do these terms include Captain Rafael and Lieutenant Woodbridge?"

"Your lieutenant can accept the terms, yes—but your chief, no."

Roy Woodbridge smiled a strange smile that those who did not know him could not understand.

"Well, speak out, my man—you who will take his life and the gold, for running us out to sea."

Yet no answer came, and Captain Markham, his brow darkening, continued:

"There were several of you last night, who told me that this was Rafael, when I believed him to be an American officer—let one of those men speak out."

Still no answer, and the enraged captain cried:

"Are you such fools that you throw away your lives? What man accepts my terms? You, sir, I make the offer to you," and he turned toward Roy Woodbridge, whose face was filled with hot blood as he quickly retorted:

"And if you were not a villain at heart, sir, you would not thus suspect that I could be so base."

"This to me, sir? You shall rue it."

Roy Woodbridge again smiled, while Rafael spoke up at once:

"You may save yourself further entreaty, Captain Markham, for while I admit that those men who betrayed me—and I know them—might have accepted your liberal offer, I may as well tell you that they could not, if they would. Lieutenant Woodbridge, there, besides myself and Luis Ramirez, who is on the island, alone know this except—If I except, perhaps, two others. A calm day, with your boats ahead, all these men could not pilot the Sea

Hawk to sea without knocking her bottom out of her."

"Then I shall take the chances and stand to sea with you and your crew on my deck, to prevent the fire from the cliffs."

"That will not prevent, sir, and both my men and myself are accustomed to iron storms," coolly returned Rafael.

"Sir chief, I will yet humble you: I will yet win," retorted Captain Markham, his face red with anger.

"Captain Markham, I will offer you a compromise," and the deep voice of the chief arrested the attention of the furious officer.

"I will not compromise, sir."

"Hear me, sir, for if I am in irons, and under a shot of death, you, your daughter and crew are in equal danger. I offer you a compromise."

"Name it, buccaneer."

"It is that you release this officer and crew—"

"Never, sir, never!"

"Hear me, sir, and then do as you please."

"I am listening."

"Well, sir, I repeat, if you will release Lieutenant Woodbridge and my men, who have rendered you good service in the past night, I will pilot you to sea."

"You good friend Captain Markham, in the veriest astonishment, while a murmur ran around the deck—a murmur of surprise and admiration.

"I repeat, sir, release those that I request, and I will pilot you safely to sea."

"Yes, get your vile crew on shore and then have your guns turn upon me, in the hope that you will be killed instead of being broken upon the wheel to which you are condemned."

"You mistake, sir; the vessel shall not be fired at."

"And then?"

"You can carry me to Havana to meet my doom."

Even Captain Markham was struck with admiration at this noble self-sacrifice; but, anxious to gain all they could, he asked:

"And Lieutenant Edmunds—will be restored to the ship ere she sails?"

Rafael turned toward the supposed youth, who promptly replied:

"No."

"I will not, except for Captain Rafael. After the Sea Hawk is at sea send Captain Rafael half way ashore in a boat. I will come out and meet you with Lieutenant Edmunds; the exchange can be made then, and you can go to Havana and be honored for having sunk the famous Curse of the Sea—with the aid of the lightning."

"Do you insult me, boy?"

"Ah, no, sir. You are in a bad box, and I was just showing you the best way to extricate yourself. If you have captured Rafael the Rover and his men, things are about equal, for we hold your lieutenant and command your ship with our guns, while you cannot get to sea unless we let you go."

Captain Markham felt that the young envoy spoke the truth, and he said, turning to Rafael:

"Deliver up my lieutenant, now in your hands, and I will accede to your terms—that is, give up your officer and men, and carry you to Havana."

"So be it, sir; let the men go ashore."

"No!"

It was the disguised Nellie who spoke, and all turned upon her.

"Well, what have you to say?" asked Captain Markham.

"I have this to say, that I will not give up Lieutenant Edmunds, except in exchange for Captain Rafael."

"But your chief says he will deliver up my officer."

"He may do as he pleases with himself and his men; but I hold Lieutenant Edmunds prisoner, and I refuse to give him up, except upon the terms stated. Nay, more; if harm befalls Captain Rafael he assured Edmunds shall die."

"That is in the hands of the gods, and the manner of the speaker that told Captain Markham argument was useless; he must yield, and sail with Rafael, and feel satisfaction in the thought that he held the chief, and had himself seen the fulfilment of the Curse of the Sea, blown into a thousand atoms; hence he said:

"Well, I accept the offer of your chief. Mr. Redmond, send this officer and his men on shore in the cutters; but first, Sir Buccaneer, you pledge me your word that I will not be fired upon."

"No, sir—let me have a word with this youth."

"In my presence only, sir."

"Then I have nothing to say," firmly averred Rafael.

"Will you speak before me, Captain Rafael?"

It was Mabel Markham that spoke, and Rafael answered at once:

"Yes, lady, if your father consents."

"Papa, I will act in your place in this unpleasant business, and I will be guided by you."

"I am certain you can trust you. You are at liberty to speak to the youth, buccaneer."

Rafael bowed, and painfully made his way a few steps distant, the irons on his ankles and wrists clanking ominously, and the supposed Nellie, who stood close behind, while Mabel Markham took her stand near.

"Nellie, I have penetrated your disguise, and from my heart I thank you for the fearless effort you have made to save me; but it is useless: I must perish, unless some unforeseen chance of escape occur, and I have not given up hope, tell my father."

"And tell him, Nellie, that he must let the vessel go to sea without a single shot being fired at it—tell him I have pledged my word that it shall be so, and to leave all with me—do you understand?"

"Perfectly."

"And, Nellie, I wish you to release Bancroft Edmunds. I ask it as a dying man would ask it—will you?"

"I will mean for him to come on here now?"

"Yes, if you will."

"I will not."

"Then, at another time let him go free unharmed. He is a noble fellow, and was but doing his duty. How he was taken I know not, but I will see that he is not harmed."

"I took him, and none but myself know where he is concealed; in fact, none know that he is on the island."

"Then let him go at some time; aid him to my escape, for he has many to love him. Will you, Nellie?"

"He shall go free; but how will you be repaid, should you die?"

"Do not think of me. If I die, I need no one to avenge me. I am an outlaw, and I must not expect mercy."

"Rafael, you are a brave, noble man, and I would give my life to save you," broke from the maiden, while tears filled her eyes.

"Maiden—for such I now know you to be—Rafael the Rover is condemned, and a prisoner, but he shall yet die; he has friends on this vessel, have hope."

Both turned quickly toward Mabel, for she it was that had spoken; but, with no trace upon her beautiful face of having given a word of hope, she stood, as though awaiting the conclusion of the conversation between the two.

"The Virgin bless you, lady! I now have hope. Captain Rafael, is there more that you would say?"

"Nothing; only don't forget poor Edmunds, and don't let the Sea Hawk be fired upon. My pledged word shall not be forfeited."

"It shall not be. Farewell, señor capitán."

Nellie grasped the manacled hands in both her own, and wheeled quickly away.

Captain Markham, if you will knock these irons from my wrists, sir, I will take the wheel, and Rafael turned calmly toward the commander, who stepped up to his daughter and asked:

"What said they, Mabel?"

"Nothing treasonable, sir. He urged that his orders, not to fire on the vessel, should be carried out, and begged the release of Bancroft Edmunds."

"The fellow has then really some good in him," and turning to his lieutenant, he said:

"Mr. Redmond, let these fellows go ashore. Another time, under better auspices, we will take them and string them up to the yard-arm."

The cutter was piped alongside, and the men ordered to get into it, but Roy Woodbridge stepped to the side of his chief, and said in a low, quick tone:

"Rafael, this is noble of you, and just what I expected of you; but, have hope; the old lugger lies in the south cove, and I will follow you to Havana, and have a brave crew at my back. Farewell, and have hope. I'll rescue you or die."

The two men grasped hands, and as the lieutenant went over the side the crew came along, and, excepting the few who had, with Luis Ramirez, betrayed their chief, grasped his hand in farewell, and thanked him for their lives.

As the last man went over the side into the cutter, Nellie passed close to where Mabel stood, and said in tones that came from her heart:

"Lady, don't let him die!"

Mabel Markham made no reply; her heart and brain were on fire with conflicting emotions, and she dare not trust herself to speak.

Lightly Nellie ran down into the waiting boat, the order to cast off was given, and as the crew pulled shoreward, the anchor was hauled atrop, the sails were unfurled, and when the cutter, after landing its cargo on the beach, returned the Sea Hawk was headed seaward and moving through the water.

"Where is the buccaneer?" suddenly cried Captain Markham, as he turned and did not see the chief where he had left him.

"I am here, sir," asked Mr. Ramsey to get me the cap and shirt of one of my men, that I might not be recognized, and be believed to be in yonder party, until too late to do the ship any harm when found out that I am on board, should my order not to fire not be obeyed."

"Hark the fellow! he has the honor of a nobleman," muttered Captain Markham, and he took his stand by the wheel, upon which the hands of Rafael already rested, guiding the vessel's course in her seaward flight.

As the Sea Hawk gained a good offing, having swiftly sped through the dangerous channel, a commotion was visible upon the cliffs, and immediately after a puff of smoke, a deep boom and an iron shot came almost together.

"They have found I was not one of my officers or crew at the wheel, and are opening fire; but we are safe, sir," said Rafael, as the fire from the cliffs was poured hot and fast after the flying vessel, now almost out of range.

"Yes; their fire is useless; we are now out of danger, I suppose?"

"Yes, Captain Markham."

"Very well. Mr. Redmond, put this buccaneer again in double irons, and, sir, lay your course for Havana."

"Ay, ay, sir," and upon the face of Ross Redmond there was a look of evident satisfaction, for he had never desired the complete subjugation of this fanatical people, and the commanders of the various forces sent against them were instructed to strike hard and spare not. The Punjab was the real diamond for which England was reaching.

The campaign of '48 was drawing to a close when a small party of English light infantry surprised a Shikhi temple at the silent hour of midnight, slew the old priests around the heathenish altars, and carried off a large amount of wealth in costly fabrics and precious stones.

The prime motive of the movement seems to have been plunder from its first inception, and right well was it carried out. When the sun rose on the work of the soldiery, the interior of the temple presented a ghastly appearance. The walls had been overturned and despoiled of their decorations; their teeth of topaz had been wrenched from their heads by British daggers, and the golden serpents that glistened in their hands had fallen a prey to avarice and rapacity. Six sabred priests of Vashnu lay cold and dead, the outraged god, and at first it was believed that not one had escaped to tell the story of midnight butchery.

But, one aged devotee of the Shikhs god had escaped during the melee, and although his body was covered with wounds, he managed to crawl into the jungle, courting the tiger's jaws to avoid the English. He told how like night-hawks the plunderers had swooped upon the temple and found the seven priests at worship; how they tore everything to pieces in their greed for riches; and how, one by one, the old men fell around the idol of the nation.

Vashnu, the idol, boasted of but one eye, and that, a diamond of almost fabulous value, was set in the center of his high forehead. It was said to possess miraculous powers, and when it became known that it had been wrenched from its socket, a cry of horror went up from every representative of the Shikhi nation, and a deputation entered the English camp to request its return. Sir Charles Napier, the British commander, heard the representations and deplored the act of his soldiery. He issued an order that the eye should be given up; but its possessor, whoever he was, did not comply. Sir Charles threatened, but to no purpose, and at last told the Shikhs that Vashnu's valuable organ must, for the present, remain lost.

Then it was that a dramatic scene was enacted in the British general's marquee. The Shikhi delegation had congregated there to receive the result of Sir Charles's hunt for the diamond. Among them, still bleeding from his wounds, stood the last priest of Vashnu. Despite his four-score years, he stood as erect as the handsomest British commander, and with his long white beard upon his darkened breast, made an imposing and prophetic-like appearance.

"I curse you a terrible death the robber who stole the sacred eye!" he cried, facing Sir Charles and raising his right hand to heaven. "The devotees of Vashnu shall follow him, and he shall perish miserably for his sacrilege. His hopes shall die before frustration; no children shall live to lisp his accursed name, and the woman whom he shall love will never be his wife! He lives henceforth in the shadow of death, and when he is happiest the vials of Vashnu's damnation shall be broken over his head!"

The English general started from "the last priest and shamanism lead from" the last in all his life he had never listened to such a malediction. Molae the priest looked like a being sent from the world of torture to pronounce the terrible curse, and Sir Charles, unable to speak, waved his hand toward the entrance. Slowly, one by one, the old man and his followers took their departure, and the sentries saw the color gradually return to the soldier's face.

From that hour the war on the part of the Shikhs raged with tenfold fury; but at last, overpowered by the soldiers of conquest, they laid down their arms, and surrendered unconditionally.

At the treaty of peace the Shikhs made another effort to get the sacred eye restored, but without avail. Its refusal to give it up, and doubtless laughed in his sleeve at the ten thousand pounds which Sir Charles offered for it.

Strange to say, the identity of the sacker of the temple had never been discovered by the commander-in-chief; but old Molae declared that the number had not exceeded thirteen. He refused to give the general any clue that might lead to their arrest; but after the war, he said that seven of them had fallen before his

countrymen, and that six, among them the possessor of Vashnu's Eye, still remained.

Shortly after the declaration of peace, a young officer in the 4th Foot resigned his commission, and sailed for England. He was known as an American named Barclay, an adventure some man who had entered the English army for the purpose of studying the manners and customs of the queen's Indian subjects. His almost insane bravery had won him distinction, and promotion was about to give him a colonel's sword, when the end of the Sikh insurrection saw him throw up his commission.

After a series of *fetes* in the English capital, he embarked for America, and took possession of one of the richest estates within sight of the city of Richmond. Wealthy, young, and handsome, Wilburn Barclay had no cares to turn his mind from the pleasures that surrounded him. The waters of the James laved the southernmost boundary of his beautiful estate, and his observatory looked afar upon the blue bay. His house became a favorite resort of the distinguished men and women of the nation. He *feted* all who crossed its threshold, and delighted them with stories of his Indian campaigns and a display of his foreign cabinets.

At last his proud estate loomed sadly now, for the army of the north met the sons of south-land there, and where Wilburn Barclay rode at noon or rested at night, cannon replied to cannon, and the yell of triumph pierced the sky. But there was one trophy of his Indian campaigns which the rich Virginian did not now show to everybody. He kept it in a strong box in his sleeping chamber, and often went to see if it still remained with him.

It was a diamond, shaped like a pigeon egg, and as large! Brilliant and without a flaw, it was a wondrously beautiful stone, fit for the richest crown in the world. But the American had resolved that it should never depart from his family. He showed it to a few distinguished friends, and told how he was the leader of the plunderers of the Sikh temple, and how, with the point of his sword, he had robbed Vashnu of his priceless eye!

"That was a terrible curse," he said, one day, after he had related the story to a lot of friends over the best wine of his cellars. "Sir Charles used to say that it unmanned him more than all his battles; but I don't care that for it!" and the handsome man snapped his fingers in disdain.

"The devotees of Vashnu have not dogged you, then?"

"No! poor souls! they do not know who took the eye. I do not want to see any dusky faces about here. The river is deep, and my slaves would make short work of the eye-hunters."

If Wilburn Barclay had any hope that rose paramount in his mind, it was to lead to the altar the lovely daughter of Major Richards, whose lands adjoined his own.

The creole belles of the South had not captivated the soldier of fortune, and he had left the colder beauties of the North, heart whole, to turn to Mabel Richards and lay his love at her feet. It was a match that seemed made in some land far from this love-lorn planet, and the proud Virginian girl looked forward with joy to the time when, triumphing over all rivals, she should become the soldier's bride.

From his fiancée Wilburn Barclay kept the story of the idol's eye. He feared that the priest's curse would make her shrink from the alliance, and not for the whole world would he have lost the peerless one. But, the story of the stolen eye finally reached Mabel's ears, and on the night before the nuptials she heard the dread story—curse and all—from his lips. It is true that she shuddered and crept closer to his strong arms, but she smiled in his face, and said that the anathema of one old man should not tear them apart.

But the beauty was to feel, in one terrible moment, the fulfillment of Molae's curse.

A fairer night than the one that followed Mabel's discovery and sight of the idol's eye never threw its starry veil over the face of the dreaming James. The birds sang a melodious epithalamium among the leafy brambles, and the waves kissed the shore with lovers' lips.

Not far from Wilburn Barclay's mansion stood an old chapel, at whose altar his parents had joined hands in marriage, and baptized their children. The old service of the church, clustered about the ancient place, and it is not strange that he should desire to wed Mabel Richards there.

Dreaming not of the Hindoo's curse, he carried Vashnu's Eye to his fiancée, and saw her, with trembling fingers and a face a trace paler than usual, fasten it among the roses that blushed their beauties beneath her faultless throat.

Then down the old aisle to the grand tone of the organ which he presented to the church, he led the high-born belle, and stood before the altar so holy with memories of other years. The wealth and beauty of a cluster of States filled the building; they admired the tall, handsome bridegroom, and the peerless bride with Vashnu's eye flashing its riches into the minister's lowly face.

The eyes of every one were turned to the altar, and the catlike figure that crept in at the shadowed door with a small dark cord in its claws was seen by no one. In the shadow of a column it stood erect, with a pair of deeply buried eyes fixed upon the white-robed bride. The hand that held the cord was now drawn back as if for a throw, and the body leaped forward.

At length the venerable pastor began the beautifully-solemn ceremony; but at the second word he paused abruptly, for a dark, whip-like snake seemed to be twining itself about Mabel's neck, just above the infernal glitter of Vashnu's Eye!

The bridegroom started back with a cry of horror, as his almost wife staggered toward the column and the demon who seemed to be manipulating the serpent.

Mabel fell before the many arms opened to receive her could render the assistance she needed, and at the column sprang forward like the panther. He bent over her for a moment, and before any one could get more than a glimpse of his aspect he was gone.

And the idol's eye flashed no longer among the roses at the beautiful altar. I will not attempt to describe the scene that followed the startling event just witnessed, nor picture to the reader the figure that bounded toward the river with a glittering object in his hand.

Wilburn Barclay raised his almost bride, and tore the thug's dread cord from her throat. He tried to revive her; but his Indian experience soon told him that an adept in the horrible art had stricken her.

Then the curse of the seventh priest of Vashnu rushed upon his mind, and with a loud cry he rushed from the chapel. Fruitless was the relentless hunt that followed; the keen blood-hound could not track through the water; the thug and his recovered eye had passed beyond the American's vengeance.

It was a night never to be forgotten by a single soul beneath the chapel's roof.

Behind the humble edifice, in her white robes and orange blossoms, they put the peerless girl away. The magnificence of her great lace collar hid the three crimson marks on her throat, but the people knew, all the same, that they were there!

No tidings of the devotee of Vashnu ever reached the interested ones.

From that night the old estate fell into decay, and its owner became a man of moods, and shuddered at his own shadows.

But the war came. He started and grasped the sword which had wrought him so much misery and unhappiness. It was a short, mad life of fiery glory.

The pile of Malvern Hill could tell the story of his last battle.

The curse had been fulfilled.

"His hopes shall die before fruition! No children shall lisp his name! and the woman whom he shall love will never be his wife!"

Such is the story of Vashnu's Eye!

BY A. W. BELLAW.

Typical Women.

BY MRS. E. F. ELLET.

In the spring of 1486 Columbus first a

ap- Again the negotiation with Columbus w

BY WILLIAM TENNYSON HEATON

Between them, they lifted the unconscious girl out of bed, and, as they brought her, traveling rug in hand, they laid her to the window. She made more resistance than as if she had been a piece of wood. Brant climbed out, received her in his arms and held her until his friend had cleared the window, when, between them, they carried the poor girl through the yard, through the gate, to the buggy, where Alexander got in and took the reins, while Brant carefully wrapped the slim figure in more shawls and placed it beside his companion, who threw one arm about it to support it. The remaining

"What's this?" cried Ben, with an oath, pull-

But when the earl, angry, bitterly disappointed, miserable, ordered his son to return to England with him by the steamer which sailed next day, Lord Henry declared that he was ready to quit New York. His father accused him of remaining to consummate a marriage with a lady unworthy of him, the relative to whom she acknowledged herself unfit to be the earl's wife; upbraided him with a want of

As she gathered up her fan and handkerchief she took a good look at herself in the glass. She saw there a peerless, beautiful woman. Her heavy shadows under her dark eyes made them appear more large and lustrous; the passionate throbbing of her heart brought a faint glow to her rich pale face of vivid loveliness.

"Do I look like a murderess?" she asked, turning to Rosine.

"Madame," answered the startled girl. "It was a jest," said her mistress, with a bitter, reckless laugh. "Now, Rosine, I must be off, or the one I desire to meet at Mrs. Livingstone's will have left there. Wait up for me; I shall not be long away."

The other ladies who hovered about the hostess took on a faded look when Esther Silverman presented herself. Her always splendid beauty was, to-night, more than merely splendid. The despair, love, anguish at her heart, shone through, not as suffering, but as rich and superb expression and coloring. The rose on her cheek was warm, the fire in her eye dazzling.

"Very poor taste of her to wear white satin, richer than mine!" complained the bride.

Esther had no thought of outshining the new-made wife. She wore her best, but it was that Gascoigne might see her in it!

As soon as possible, she ensconced herself in a deep window-seat, and, from her nook, beheld the girl moving restlessly from room to room, evidently in search of her.

Her eyes fed on his grave, sad face; her spirit rose in protest against her own unhappy fate. Why should she not be his wife?

The gay, softly-beating, softly-repeating strains of the delicious dance measures almost made her scream aloud, so wrought to almost frenzy did she grow, gazing at the one she loved, knowing that happiness had slipped out of her grasp. Over and over to herself she murmured some verses that floated to the surface of her memory, though she knew not how they came there.

"Still that music underneath
Works to madness in my brain.
Even the roses seem to breathe
Poisoned perfumes, full of pain."

"Let me think—my head is aching
I have little strength to think.
And I know my heart is breaking;
Yet, oh love, I will not shrink!"

"In his look is such sweet sadness,
As he bends that look on me,
I am helpless—lost, I feel—
Call it guilt—but it must be!"

The sharp darts of pain that shot through Esther's head became more frequent. Once or twice it occurred to her that she was feeling much as she felt that horrible day, so many weary years ago, when her twin-sister died, and—and—so many other things happened.

Presently the earl, wandering listlessly about, doing his best to appear interested and pleased, for courtesy's sake, felt a strange, magnetic attraction drawing him to a certain part of the back drawing-room, where, on the wall, hung the ranks of silks and jewels and saw the star-eyes of Esther fixed full upon him.

"Ah, you are here?" he said, tenderly, as soon as he could reach her side. "I have been looking for you so long that I was about to leave in despair."

"Gascoigne!" her low, thrilling voice breathed music into his name.

How beautiful, how faultless she looked! What could there be to set the sea between her and him! How her eyes shone!—dark as night, bright as diamonds.

"Esther," he whispered, bending over her, "you are a beautiful mystery to me! I do not understand why you are here to-night if you and I are to be separated. Take back that cruel message you sent me. Say to me, now, that it was a jest."

"It was no jest, Gascoigne. Something dark and dreadful lies between us. Let me whisper to you what that hideous thing is. Murder—it is murder! My hand is red with blood. Look at it!" she tore off her glove and held up her soft, white, shapely hand, while her glittering eyes searched his face with a curious, intent look.

"You are ill and over-excited, Esther," spoke the earl, beginning to feel uneasy, half-shrinking from her fixed gaze.

"I am ill, Gascoigne. My head aches terribly. I think I shall go mad with the pain."

"Shall I call your carriage? Will you go to the dressing-room?"

"Yes, if you please, Gascoigne!"

She arose to take his offered arm. Perhaps the sudden emotion increased the pain in her head, for she gave a low, sharp scream, and would have fallen had he not caught her.

"She has fainted," he cried, to those about him.

Alas! it was worse than an ordinary fainting-fit. It was just such a deep unconsciousness as that from which she once awoke in the ravings of brain fever.

Finding that she could not be revived, her physician was sent for, and she was placed in her carriage and taken home under his care. Before morning the congestion had partially passed away, but Esther was in a high fever and delirious.

Faithful Rosine put away her lady's jewels and satin robe, and went to her bedside to watch patiently over her.

"Miss Mercedes ought to be here," she said, to Mephistopheles, "but I do not know where she is, or how to find her."

(To be continued—commenced in No. 431.)

A THURUS'S SONG.

BY ERN E. STILLMAN.

I saw a wee bird swinging, swinging,
Close by a pellucid lake,
A wild, brown rush—
A brown, wild thrush;
And beneath him the ripples broke.

I heard this glad bird singing, singing,
And his song was loud and clear;
So feigned with joy,
With naught to cloy,
As he sung it behind the mere.

And through my heart went ringing, ringing,
A beautiful, tender strain,
Like a thrush's song
The rushes among,
Or the tinkling of summer rain.

Then went the brown bird winging, winging
Away to the dusky west;
Oh! a maiden fair
Is waiting there—
Ah! why sings the song in my breast?

Wild Will,

THE MAD RANCHERO;

OR,

THE TERRIBLE TEXANS.

A Romance of Kit Carson, Jr., and Big Foot Wallace's Long Trail.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM."

(MAJOR SAM S. HALL.)

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAD AVENGER.

As Big Foot and his party were riding through the ford, the Tonkaway was just running his scalping-knife around the head of the last Indian in the death ring about the tree, when he was grasped from behind by the huge black bear which had previously played a part in the death of the Comanches.

Raven knelt in an instant the fix he was in, as the huge claws clamped about him, and by a sudden twist brought himself about to face the bear, before the powerful claws met too closely around his breast.

With another desperate struggle, in which his sinews were stretched to their utmost tension, he succeeded, being on the edge of the bank, in throwing himself and the bear over the brink, and the two rolled over and over down into the water, the knife of Raven being driven between the animal's ribs to the hilt, as often as the Indian could get room to swing his arm.

Both rolled down and disappeared beneath the dark waters, in plain view of Big Foot and his party, as they were in the river crossing.

"Waal," shouted Big Foot, in an excited and

astonished manner, "if this don't beat their devil! What in the name of Crockett, are cum-in' next? It's a danged queer time for their Tonk to be b'ar-huntin', but I reckon by their way things looks like b'ar war a-huntin' their Tonk. That animal must be an old acquaintance an' his a mighty 'fectionate cuss, he's soft on their red, an' heavy on the hug. Look a-thar, boys; by the way that water b'iles reckon they're havin' a reg'lar fandango, but their drink kinder shets off their music. I ain't at all skeered 'bout their Tonk; he's come till their foot. Reckon that bear 'll never hang 'round another bee-tree. Hurra! Thar's our Tonk! jist a clavin' up their bank down below thar, and yer can jist bet that b'ar are fish-bait by thar. Cum on, boys; our horses 'll get chilled; it an' time we wased 'round here."

"Sure, Misther Big Put," exclaimed Larry, in a terrified manner, "I'm thinkin' it's meself that'll go back beyond to the ranch. I'm not fallin' at all well; am not used to sayin' such heathenish things, as I have seen this night. God kape me frum ever passin' another sich! Begorror, it's a fool I was, to ever 'ave ould Ireland. How far does the likes of ye call it to the salt say, from this beast of a place? Sure, I'm fannished fur fude, an' dyin' fur slape; but I c'd rather ate nor rist wid sich murthin' sights about me."

"Waal, Larry," said Big Foot, a broad grin overspreading his face, "make a blue streak back, if yer want, but yer can jist stop at their place Wild Will was cookin' in. I'll tell thar beauty to cum up this a-way, an' give us a hand an' fight in yer place."

"Howly mutther o' Moses! I c'den furgit him entirely, becad! but I'de a dozen divils wid you b'ys afore me, an' I c'd do, an' I c'd do, an' I c'd do. I'm thinkin' I can't stir wid any safety to meself, anyways, an' I'm forced to stay wid yez, anyhow," and Larry, jerking his head about in every direction, as if expecting some new horror, spurred his horse, and scrambled to the opposite bank with him, and then he halted their animals, all dripping with water, by the tree which supported the dead Comanches.

"Ther boys hav' gone in heavy right on their june fur reg'lar biz, declared Big Foot, "but, whar in thunder are they a-hidin' the'sel's?"

At this moment Tom and Joe, with a low whistle of caution, sprung into the midst of the party; and the Tonkaway looking wet and fatigued joined them, coming fresh from his struggle with the bear.

No allusion was made by the boys in regard to the laughable mistake their parids had made, when they had discovered the dead Indians, as they knew Big Foot would feel sore on the subject.

"Mighty glad ter see yer, boys," welcomed Tom; "we need yer right now if ever. Kit hav' gone on a lone scout inter their camp o' ther reds in spite of our ch'd do, an' if he's gotbiled it ain't no fault o' ours. I reckon with you boys we can make a clean sweep through them without gittin' corraled, an' if they've got Kit, as things look, why, they can't keep him frum this crowd, nor Mollie either. Howdy, Tonk! Hope yer hadn't hurt my b'ar. What's ther difficult' between yer?"

"No like Raven take scalp," answered the Tonkaway. "Hug Raven tight claws, sharp. Raven knife more sharp—more long—find heart gone down river—cuttin' him reds!"

"How did yer clean out their reds?" interrupted Jack, addressing Tom.

"We lay off in their brush," explained Tom, "an' knifed the whole caboodle. We hain't used no shootin'—no more! we've laid round here, ner stung no loose jaw. It's only three miles up to their camp o' ther reds an' they're as bold an' brash as if they had a thousand braves."

"Waal, yer hav' harnesses a few on 'em up," returned Jack, "an' they don't fear no kick ag'in their traces much. Six makes a good team; but them looks rather balky an' too badly spavined to draw much of a load," and Jack gave a quiet laugh while he punched Clow in the ribs.

Just at this moment the fusillade from the revolvers of Kit, as he laid Mary on the grass and fired into the savages who were pursuing them, struck the ears of the Rangers, ever acute, borne down, as the reports were, by the night breeze.

"By the blood of Crockett!" yelled Big Foot, "thar goes Kit's shooters! He's alone, boys, an' wants help. Mount for yer lives! A Texan! a Ranger! a White Man is fighting for his life! Sling yer'sel's ready fur blood an' vengeance, an' remember, no mercy! no quarter! no quit! ther camp if thar's a thousand o' 'em!"

There was a dashing and plunging of mustangs as Tom and Joe prepared to join the impatient party outside the bushes.

"Keep by my nag, Larry," cried Big Foot; "keep by me, an' shoot ther red cusses when yer can draw a bead. Yer'll soon git yer like it, an' it 'll cum easy. Are yer ready, boys? One minute may lose a white man's life."

But his last words were drowned by a long, piercing, unearthly yell, that thrummed from the opposite river bank.

The moon broke free from the black cloud that had hung like a pall between it and the earth, showing to the astonished Rangers, who sat their horses, as if suddenly petrified, the form of Wild Will, the Red Trailer, upon his horse, who came bounding with maddening leaps and eyes protruding with terror.

The dreadful yell or scream of Wild Willaday, cut the night air, and sent a thrill of horror to the very marrow of those who awaited his coming, without sense enough left in them to clear the way.

Up the steep bank sprung the terrified, panting steed, covered with foam, bearing his mad master.

On they came—Will's eyes staring straight before him, showing no sign that he saw his old friends and dashed past them at headlong speed through the oaks, and out into the prairie beyond, followed by the Rangers who halted as they cleared the bottom timber.

Larry, pale as death, his teeth chattering, kept in the midst of the Texans, grasping his saddle horn with the desperation of despair.

Wild Will turns his horse directly up the river and points for the Indian camp.

How does he know its location? No one has told him, and if such was the case he is too insane to understand.

No more horrible sight could be presented to the eye than Wild Will now going on a red trail for revenge!

The Indian head-dress, his hideously painted face, his long black hair flying in the wind, the fiendish, vengeful look in his eyes—his howls, shrieks and laughter, as he dashes along, all proclaim that the Red Trailer comes for blood!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RED TRAILER'S CHARGE.

In the Indian camp all are wrapped in slumber except the sentinels and the two captives—Kit and Mary Halliday.

The latter is suffering excruciating bodily pain; due to the manner in which she is bound. She had heard Kit's voice taunting the Indians, and the threats of Black Wolf. Her mind was filled, indeed, overburdened, with misery, before Kit made his visit to rescue her, in regard to the horrible treatment of her family, and now she has more to suffer than most human minds could stand; and prays that something may happen in her favor to relieve the great strain that is on her nerves, weakened as they are by want of food and sleep.

Kit's proud, brave spirit seems to have oozed out with the streams of blood that have, since his capture, poured from his wounds. For his head, so erect when hissing hot words at his captors, is now drooped upon his breast, the flashing eyes are shaded by the quivering lids, while the long lashes rest upon his cheeks, through which hot, burning tears are washing trails through the blood and grime.

But the tears come not from sufferings of his own; they are brought out by the heartrending moans of her he loves better than his life, into whose tender flesh the tight-drawn cords are

cutting as deep as her groans of anguish cut into his heart.

But a sudden commotion stirs the Comanche camp; sharp, quick signals of alarm are transmitted from sentinel to sentinel. A long, shrill, piercing shriek comes cutting through the air from above the river. Warriors spring from their blankets, grasp their weapons, listen, then look with wonder at each other, for they know by the sound that but a single horse is approaching the camp.

Crash and wood are thrown upon the fires, although the moon now makes the night almost as light as day.

On comes the sound of the clattering hoofs; the air is filled with yells so strange, so unlike anything they have ever heard before, that the Indians huddle together in superstitious terror.

On, on plunged, they knew not what.

The bushes and branches crack and bend, and out into the clearing, bursting from the thick border of trees, comes Wild Will—an apparition of lightning, so rapid, so unlooked for, that the quivering hairs are unable to fit arrow to bow-string, and guns shake like the aspen.

So fiendish and wild is the vision which breaks unexpectedly upon them that braves who have never known fear gaze with amazement and dread at the madman and maddened horse.

One wild yell—in which were blended satisfaction and bitter hatred—sprung from the lips of Will, as he bounded in among the massed Indians, a revolver in each hand, and, with lightning rapidity, sent them flying in all directions, as they were unable to fit arrow to bow-string, and guns shake like the aspen.

Bear Claw sprung from the crowd, and in the confusion gained the shelter and dragged Mary out into the woods, thinking the father had come for his child, and by some means would rescue her from his captives.

Black Wolf, unable to form his braves, sprung toward Kit, his captive, whose eyes were taking note of everything in the strange scene before him.

The glittering steel flashed in his face, a muttered prayer was on his lips, as a ball from one of Wild Will's revolvers went crashing through the skull of the Comanche chief, who fell dead at the feet of his white enemy.

At the death of the chief, the Indians became desperate. Realizing that he who was dealing death upon all sides was mortal, and, as they first supposed, an evil spirit from the other world, arrows and bullets now flew as thick as hail about and near Wild Will and Kit.

But when the former saw his horse and ran his bow-knife across the things which bound the latter to the torture-tree.

A dozen arrows hung from the thick Mexican blanket which was secured to Will's shoulders, and flying being the sound of the blanket, saved the maniac from death many times.

Before Kit could comprehend that Wild Will was cutting him free, a ball from an Indian rifle struck him, glancing and ploving a furrow along the side of his already bruised head, and rendering him senseless.

With a yell of triumph Will grasped Kit by the belt, and drew his senseless form up before him.

Howls of rage filled the air, and the Indians fought each other endeavoring to make their way toward and prevent the escape of the two whites; but, having no leader, and being so demoralized, they were but a mixed, wrangling mob, falling over their own dead and wounded.

Wild Will turned in his saddle, and with an insane peal of laughter, drove his bowie into his horse.

The animal, with a scream of terror and pain, bounded with headlong speed clear of the Comanche camp, leaving near a score of dead and dying Indians to mark the passage of the Red Trailer.

The Indians were so confused at the death of so many of their comrades and their chief—all slain by one man—that they did not know they were on the eye of a more desperate encounter.

There was but a single exception, and that was the chief, Bear Claw.

Returning from the woods where he had secreted Mary, he saw Wild Will gallop toward the west with great speed, Kit hanging before him across the saddle, like a dead man. His warriors were, he knew, in a terrible state.

He paused an instant on the border of the wood, and glanced around. His sharp ears—he being some distance from the confusion of the camp—detected the sound of galloping horses coming from down the river, from the same point whence Wild Will had come dashing into the camp.

A few bounds brought him in a position where he distinctly saw, not a half-mile away, seven horsemen that he knew were white men.

He comprehended in a moment that it would be useless to try and get the Indians into any order to meet the charge of the Rangers. He had seen enough of their fast-shooting guns to know that the world could not stand up to them.

With great speed Bear Claw immediately ran to where his favorite mustang was picketed, threw on saddle and adjusted a loop-rein in an instant; then, springing on his horse's back, he pierced, unceasingly with his comrades, which were drowned in the confusion and yells, and then rode back to where he had concealed Mary.

Once more he placed his captive before him in the saddle, and taking a northerly direction he urged his mustang to its greatest speed.

Weakness and horror, and the senseless form, in the arms of a bloodthirsty savage, was borne one way as fast as a fleet prairie steed could go, while her hero lover, wounded and senseless, and nearer death than life, in the open prairie toward their horses, hody pursued by the Rangers who shot them down.

All the mustangs of the war-party, besides many they had stolen from the ranches, were recaptured by the scouts and driven in near the camp.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TWO TRAILS.

"RIDE UP, LARRY, an' show yer grit!" exclaimed Big Foot. "Boys, all ready with yer shooters! Remember thar grave back ther. Here we are! At 'em! give 'em hot lead!"

And so they rode, until a knell to those before them, the Rangers drove their spurs deep into the flanks of their mustangs, and bounded through the trees and bushes into the midst of the Comanches, sending the lead from their revolvers hurtling through the doubly confused and scared mass of Indians.

The charge of Wild Will was a bewildering surprise, it was so strange and unexpected, that that of the seven scouts was a greater one.

The Indians were taken at a disadvantage, and a perfect massacre was the result.

In ten minutes every Indian in sight was dead, or dying, for the red-skins, having no leader, many of them fled to the woods, wild with fright at the strange events of the night, and some who seemed to have lost all reasoning power, ran to the open prairie toward their horses, hody pursued by the Rangers who shot them down.

All the mustangs of the war-party, besides many they had stolen from the ranches, were recaptured by the scouts and driven in near the camp.

"Where is Mary? Where is Kit?" was the cry of the Rangers, one to the other.

The shelter where the former was secured, and the tree where their pard had been bound, were found; but it was not light enough for them to find any clue which would show how the captives had been disposed of; so the Rangers were forced to await daylight before they could do anything.

The Rangers ascertained by an inspection of the camp that Wild Will had made a perfectly wonderful flight, by the number of dead lying almost in a mingled mass near the torture tree, to which Kit had been tied, and one and all gave the mad avenger the well-deserved name of the Red Trailer.

That Black Wolf had tried to kill Kit could be easily seen by the position of the chief's body. Not one of the Rangers escaped without a wound, some of a serious nature, or would have been so considered by any but men like themselves.

The mustangs of Larry and the Tonkaway were both killed in the latter part of the fight, Larry had kept near the giant scout, and after his blood got heated by the exciting scenes, his

Irish fighting qualities showed themselves, and he was in with a will, using his gun as he would a shillelagh, cracking skulls right and left; in fact Larry performed his part in a manner that called forth the praise of all, especially from Big Foot, who now paid particular attention to his "picketed-up" pard.

When the Rangers found it impossible to ascertain by any trail or sign the whereabouts of either Kit or Mary, they seated themselves about one of the Indian camp-fires to rest from their long and hard ride, taken in the early hours of the night, well knowing that the sun would shortly show them sure signs of what had become of their friends.

The Tonkaway soon glided into the circle, and stood in the firelight a moment, casting a wandering glance around the camp, and then seated himself near Big Foot, exclaiming, in a satisfied manner:

"Good—have war council—what think—where Mary gone—where Kit gone—Comanche no kill—let Big Foot chief speak—Raven's ears open, boys."

"Keep yer eyes open, Tonk," said Big Foot, glancing around the camp, "fur sum o' them skulking smoky-skins might send ther cards in ther shape of a blue whistler in at us. We ain't targits, jist about now, 'round this here fire."

"Comanche gone," answered Raven, "pick up feet fast—trail up river—no stop—much scare—hear fraid fast shootin'—guns."

"Waal, make me so, yer oughter know thar natur," as few whar they're gone, I'm bustin' my head a-thinkin' on. I can't put things right ter suit me. I'm ther wust mixed-up man in this crowd; never seen things turn out so danged unnatural-like afore. What yer all thinkin' 'bout, boys?"

"I'll tell yer what's glidin' through my brain-box," answered Tom Clark. "I hain't forgot them revolver-shots, what we heard when Kit war a-playin' a lone hand, an' I thought possibly, fact are, I put it up, as a dead sure thing that Kit got bad hurt afore the reds tied him up, an' like emf he had Mollie, jist a histin' himself fur our camp, when he dum ther shootin'! Put this an' that together, an' I says he war in too bad a fix ter git away hisself, an' so somebody got an' took him."

"Thar's a heap o' sense in yer talk, Tom," said Big Foot, "but how about Mollie, she—"

"I have made up that item clear in my mind," interrupted Joe. "It is plain to see that the cunning Bear Claw, down below at the light at the ranch, struck with Mollie's beauty, he's a-chief-in-fact, has played the same hand he did at the ranch. Struck with Mollie's beauty, he's a-going to make her his squaw."

"Joe's words good," said Raven; "Joe's tongue straight—Tom good council talk—both great scout."

"Boys," cried out Jack Hodge, "one thing are sure—that ain't no stage-route here, an' consequently they has gone off on two or four legs. The first owin' ter weakness, ain't tew be think of, an' if they are bein' took away hobbak, I reckon we has sum tall old ridin' afore us."

"Bet yer any interest in ever seein' the Republic," broke in Clow, "that the reds, what stampeded from here, fetch up with another pack. They wouldn't be so danged bold if thar warn't a big crowd within a day's ride or so, that I'd like mighty well ter know what it war. Kit done his shootin'; thar's no more ter think any of ther d'ed reds here in ther camp were knocked under by him. If he war takin' Mollie, he would 'a' made a streak fur ther ford, not this a-way."

No sooner had Clow spoken, than Raven sprung to his feet, muttering:

"Raven hear big foot!" and glided out of the circle of fire-light past the blanket shelter, and disappeared in the darkness beneath the branches of the oaks.

"Keep on, boys; sling yer council-talk, as ther Tonk says," exclaimed Big Foot. "Things are gittin' a little more clear, an' I reckon daylight 'll show everything strait. It's gittin' light a little now whar the sun pops up. That Tonk are the whitest red I ever saw. I kind ter soften on him. Larry, I didn't allow, ware with shucks, but he went in, as brash as a black wolf among buller-calves. How daz yer feel, Larry?"

"Felle, is it!" answered Larry; "I'm a-falin' as wake an' faint as a new-born babe. Phat do the red divils do for 'atin'? Sure I see nothin' ar'und that w'd keep a mouse from starvin' without he turns her an' ate grass. Phat war sich divil made fur, to bother us like hoids an' yells an' the loike of that, let alone runnin' others mad wid grafe, and murthin' females widout mercy? Murder an' turf, but it's meself that's thakin' the Virgin we has none sich a could Ireland; but there might a-bin, long ago, and were atther bairn banished wid the snakes bein' Saint Patrick, Heaven bless him! The curse on the red h'athen, for they has killed me horse, as decent an' anemie as ever was after whisikin' a tail; an' a kind frind he was to me. I forgive him fur thyrin' to send me down the stape bank beyon'. I'm thinkin' he had a mind to commit suicide, that time. God knows, Faith! he won't let. Bedad a good horse is the best frind a man c'd hav' in this cuss ev a untury, an' me heart's falin' sad, indade it is, fur the loss ev him."

"Don't fret, Larry," said Big Foot; "you've got friends here whar'll go ther life on yer. I like yer better fur yer thinkin' of yer critter; but yer shall take yer pick outen the hild caboodle what we has got in the mornin'."

"An' dard, Larry," added Joe, "I'll go and see if I can't corral some grub. I'm as hungry as you—all of us; and it will be strange if I don't forage up some kind of eatables in as large a camp as this, if it ain't none of some dried-beef an' Joe started on a tour of inspection, avoiding the heaps of dead Indians.

The Tonkaway now put in an appearance, and stood within the circle of firelight with folded arms, awaiting to be questioned.

"Has yer struck anything fresh?"

"Yes," replied Raven, "me find whar Eagle Eye shoot—kill Comanche—big fight—dark night—Eagle Eye great warrior—red-men run fast—thru hatchet—shoot arrow—hit Eagle Eye—he me blood lose—know nothin' when tie up—drag him on ground."

"Told yer so, boys!" cried Tom, quickly. "I knowed he w'd a-fit till he drapped, an' w'd keep 'em a-farin' grass, as long as he could grip a shooter or bowie. I'm on ther anxious seat fur daylight, fur it's jist ther danged thing whar he c'd a-scoted. His corpus ain't here, that ar' a comfort."

Reckless Joe now came up with a calf-skin sack of dried buffalo-meat, and again returned to the north portion of the camp and brought on his back a bag of parched corn.

Stanhope he might have had hopes of making her Mrs. Craig. And it was this friendship which secured young Wells his position.

"Well?"

"He was also personally acquainted with Dr. Wells, and after him with Col. Stanhope. He knows the latter to have had the reputation, at least, of being a bachelor, and consequently not likely to have a son whom he would recognize and associate with his daughter, whose le—"

"All of which is very good so far as it goes," interrupted Felix, impatiently. "But, sir, your premises are rather shaky."

"Waiving that, then, suppose it were to be established that the Egbert of our acquaintance bears a striking resemblance to the lamented Dr. Wells, while Adele—"

"Miss Stanhope, if you please?"

"I beg your pardon! While Miss Stanhope as strongly resembles the gallant colonel, the brother and sister having some features in common, would it not appear that the link was through the mother?"

"How recently has Mr. Craig seen the brother and sister?"

"The former not for nineteen years—the latter never."

"Then how can he tell whom they resemble?"

"I am the fortunate possessor of a daguerreotype of the individuals."

"You have a likeness of Miss Stanhope? How did you come possessed of it? I demand it, sir, instantly!"

"All in good time. If you wish it after it has answered its purpose, you shall have it."

"But how did you get it?"

"I was shrewd enough to foresee this exigency, not to mention a predilection for the original of the effigy, and let us say, *confiscated* it! Now, sir, I purpose to submit this daguerreotype to the examination of the ancient lover; and you will have the benefit of his unbiased judgment."

"When can we see this gentleman?"

"Immediately."

"Very well, sir; I attend you. Lead the way."

Felix got his hat.

"My son, may I not accompany you?" asked Mrs. Cornish.

"Mother, you may trust me now. However this eventuates, I am determined to see the palm of Egbert Stanhope's hand!"

"M. Bourdoine, as you have been present during the whole of this affair, I shall be glad of your company, if agreeable to you."

"Merci (thanks) my friend. Pray command me."

"The gentlemen went out together, and fifteen minutes later entered the office of the cotton broker."

"Are Messrs. Craig & Harney in?" asked Long Jack of the messenger-boy in the outer office.

"Mr. Craig is in his private office," was the reply. "Mr. Harney has not yet returned from the Exchange."

"Conduct me to Mr. Craig."

"The boy led the way through to an inner office where sat a man of perhaps sixty years of age. He looked like one who had led a tranquil life, but in his eyes there was a shade of melancholy or regret."

"Mr. Craig," said Long Jack, when they had been courteously received and seated, "allow me to introduce myself as John Boardman, and my friends—"

"Excuse me," interrupted Felix, haughtily. "For myself not your friend."

"Mr. Craig, in great surprise, said: 'You are Mr. Craig?'"

Long Jack laughed lightly, to mask the real annoyance he felt.

"A designation of no importance," he said. "These gentlemen are Mr. Cornish, of Memphis, and M. Bourdoine—a cosmopolite, I take it."

Mr. Craig acknowledged the introduction, and waited for the development of the business of his unexpected guests.

"Mr. Craig," began Jack, "I must ask you to go back twenty years to a messenger-boy named Charles J. Wells. Did you employ such a one?"

Mr. Craig started and turned slightly pale.

"Yes," he replied.

"He was convicted of forgery as set forth in these papers, published at that time?"

Long Jack laid the papers before the broker.

"He was so convicted," admitted Mr. Craig, compressing his lips, as if in pain.

"And branded in the palm with the letter F, the rigor of the law being exacted upon him because of his obstinate refusal to betray his accomplices or give any clew to the money?"

"Yes, sir."

"In consequence of which not a penny was ever recovered?"

"None was recovered, except what was found on his person."

"Now, sir, you were intimately acquainted with the mother of the boy Wells?"

"Again a shadow of pain flitted across the face of the old gentleman. He seemed to struggle a moment; then he said:

"May I ask the purpose of these questions, sir?"

"It is my wish to fix the identity of the boy, now grown to manhood, and to prevent his imposing upon any honorable family whom he is now seeking to deceive."

"After a moment Mr. Craig said:

"I knew his mother."

"And her first husband, Dr. Wells?"

"I was acquainted with him for years."

"She subsequently married a Colonel Stanhope?"

"Yes."

"Were you acquainted with him, so that you remember his personal appearance?"

"Perfectly."

"Do you know anything of the Stanhopes subsequent to this marriage? Was there any offspring?"

"She had a daughter."

"Named—"

"Adele."

"Good!" cried Jack, radiantly. "We are getting on better than I expected. Now, sir, do you know whether Colonel Stanhope had a son by any marriage previous to his union with Mrs. Wells?"

"He was a bachelor, sir."

"The boy Wells was confined in prison two years?"

"Yes."

"What became of him after that?"

"I know nothing further of him."

"You do not know whether he lived in the house of his step-father?"

"No. Colonel Stanhope left New Orleans about the time the boy's term in prison expired."

"To go North?"

"I do not know. I have lost all track of him and his family for seventeen years."

"Now, sir, can you give us any idea what sort of a man Dr. Wells was?"

"He was tall and of commanding presence, with dark hair and eyes, straight nose, firm mouth, and a chin indicative of resolution."

"Was he a man calculated to influence women strongly?"

"I believe that he owed much of his professional success to his magnetic power over the opposite sex."

"Thank you. Can you now describe Colonel Stanhope?"

"He was the antipodes of Dr. Wells. He was much smaller, with light hair and blue eyes. He lacked the dignity of the other man, but was so full of stirring, vigorous life that he too easily impressed his will upon others."

"Excuse me for trespassing on your patience so long. I am nearly done. Lastly, what sort of a woman was Mrs. Wells, afterward Mrs. Stanhope?"

A change passed over Mr. Craig's face. He cleared his throat, as if to relieve that constriction caused by painful memories. He drew his silk handkerchief across his eyes and forehead, and then rubbed it in his hands.

When he spoke, his voice was low, with a cadence of tender sadness.

"She was a woman of exquisite gentleness, all of whose life was in her love," he said.

Felix thought of Adele, and could hardly repress a groan.

"In person," pursued the old man, with a far-away look in his eyes, as if he were describing the phantom of his recollection conjured up before him—"in person she was remarkable for delicacy, elegance, refinement. I don't know that I make myself clear; but there are women who in dress and demeanor impress one as the impersonation of a poem. She was to humanity what Pagan marble is to art."

But here the old gentleman suddenly checked himself and actually blushed faintly. Strangers could have little sympathy with his heart-pictures.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said. "Of course you have no wish to do with her physical appearance. She was rather small, with brown hair of a medium shade, and gray eyes."

"Sir, your descriptions have more than met my expectations," said Long Jack.

He then produced from his pocket a daguerreotype case, of the style common twenty years ago. Opening it, he screened half the likeness by holding a piece of paper over it, leaving revealed the picture of Adele Stanhope.

At sight of this Felix trembled with anger and pain, and could scarcely restrain the impulse to snatch it from Long Jack's hands.

"What do you think of this picture?" asked the gambler, extending it toward Mr. Craig.

The old gentleman wiped his spectacles and gazed at it in silence, until his eyes grew humid.

"Is it her?" he asked, in a low tone.

"Yes. Does it resemble her?"

"In expression, yes. There is all the gentleness and sensitiveness. Physically she is as much a reproduction of the father as the difference of sex would permit. She has his features exquisitely refined."

"Now, sir, what do you think of this?"

And Long Jack drew the paper from before Egbert, who was represented seated, while Adele leaned with her peculiar grace on his shoulder.

"It is her boy," said the old man, in a tone of sadness. "He is the image of his father at that age. She would never be convinced of his guilt; and perhaps it was better so; it would have killed her to believe him unworthy. It is given to few of us to be loved as she loved."

"And the sigh that arose to his lips was only partly repressed."

Felix arose, looking stern and pale.

"Mr. Craig," he said, "this is sufficient. We need not longer trespass upon your time. You have done me a service which I cannot hope to requite—I can only thank you."

But here the office-boy stuck his head in at the door and said:

"Mr. Harney, sir."

A strange smile came to Long Jack's lips, but instantly disappeared.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. PAUL HARNEY.

In the doorway stood a man of perhaps fifty years of age. There was a stoop in his shoulders, so that he never held his head erect. He looked out from under his brows with restless eyes; and he had a trick, too, of rubbing his hands one over the other, as if he were washing them.

The characteristic expression of his face was weakness, which was heightened by his sallow complexion.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Craig—"my partner, Mr. Harney. These gentlemen are Mr. Boardman—Mr. Cornish—M. Bourdoine."

Mr. Harney had cast one glance round the room, and his bilious countenance had turned a dirty gray. He now acknowledged the introduction with a silent bow.

"Sir, your coming is very opportune," said Long Jack, advancing and extending his hand cordially. "I can hardly consider myself a total stranger to you, though it is now nearly twenty years since I had the honor of meeting you. The dead Past never seems to bury its dead. Mr. Harney. At the most unexpected time and in the most extraordinary way things long forgotten are again dragged to the surface."

"But before apprising you of our business, may I submit to your examination a daguerreotype?"

Mr. Harney had yielded his hand to Long Jack, rather than taken that of the gambler. While the latter was speaking, the eyes of the former had wandered from and returned to the face of his interlocutor with that uneasiness betrayed by animals when steadfastly gazed at.

Having seated himself with his elbows resting on the arms of his chair, he took the daguerreotype and seemed to study it carefully.

"Do you recognize either of the persons?" asked Long Jack.

Mr. Harney shook his head slowly from side to side.

"No," he said, reflectively. "I know no such faces."

"Go back twenty—thirty years."

A pause, and then:

"I can recall no such persons. It is a long way back, sir. And yet—I do not know—there seems something—No. I must have forgotten, if I ever knew such persons."

"There was a messenger boy guilty of forgery—"

"Ah!"

Long Jack stopped at the sudden interruption, and waited for his hint to work its effect.

Mr. Harney bent more closely over the picture. After a moment, he moistened his lips with his tongue, and then said in a monotonous tone:

"That was a sad case, sir. Is this the picture of Charles Wells? I think I now see a resemblance to his father, who did not live to be pained by his son's fall."

"That is all I require, sir. It is the picture of Charles J. Wells. It is but fair to you to say that your identification of him may go to frustrate an attempt to insinuate himself into an unsuspecting family as an honest man."

Jack spoke with quiet deliberation, looking straight at Mr. Harney.

The latter fumbled amid some papers, coughed behind his hand, and then resumed the wringing or washing motion.

"But the brand in his palm!" he said, constrainedly. "I should think it an insuperable obstacle."

"He cleverly hid it beneath a kid glove, and affects an elegance of attire whose aim is to divert singularity, as much as may be, the unusual habit of being gloved on all occasions."

Here Felix arose, much disturbed.

"Pray let us bring this to a close," he said. "Gentlemen, allow me to thank you once more."

"But stay! one question, if you please. Had this Charles Wells any other mark on his right hand?"

"No, no other mark," replied both of the gentlemen.

"A birthmark, covering the third and fourth fingers?"

"Certainly not," asserted Messrs. Craig & Harney.

"Ah! a birthmark!" muttered Long Jack, elevating his brows.

"Then, by Heaven!" began Felix, but choking with emotion, he left off and started toward the door.

The confined air of the room seemed as if it would stifle him.

M. Bourdoine sprang to his side, opened the door and accompanied him to the street.

"Monsieur Cornish, I am vis a vis you heart and soul!" declared the melodramatic Frenchman.

"Ah! Dieu! shall we not revenge some treachery? Quelle diablerie! (what fiend's work!) my pupil ye victim—"

"Oh, stop! for God's sake!" cried Felix, wringing to distraction.

Long Jack had stopped to take leave of Messrs. Craig & Harney. He held the hand of the latter while he said:

"The same treachery which led the boy to seek to shift his crime to your shoulders, Mr. Harney, has marked the course of the man. But a just Providence always intervenes to prevent the wicked from prospering. Honest men would be hopelessly at the mercy of sharper, but for this Omnipotent aid."

There was a strange smile, rather about his eyes than his lips, as he gazed at the old cotton broker.

The dirty gray pallor returned to Mr. Harney's cheeks, as he bowed assent.

Passing through the outer office, Long Jack indulged in a quiet chuckle.

"Well," he said, when he rejoined M. Bourdoine and Felix on the street, "do you wish the picture?"

"Most assuredly, yes!" said Felix, almost snatching it from his hand. "It has served your purpose well!"

"I am satisfied with the result," said Long Jack, complacently. "I have kept my word—have I not?—and satisfied you that Charles J. Wells, alias Egbert Stan—"

"Not spare me any discussion of this matter! You say that you are satisfied with your infamous work. Let it rest, then."

"I believe that a juster designation might be selected for what I have done. However, I am not strenuous on that point. But this slight return, at least, you will not deny me, for having given you an opportunity to transmit to the future line of Cornishes unimpaired cause for pride in—"

"Have a care!" cried Felix, stopping short with the daguerreotype and quivering nostrils. "One word against the woman whose picture you have polluted by having it in your possession, and I will shoot you down in your tracks!"

With his wonderful self-possession, Long Jack betrayed no sign of being startled by this outbreak, but he quietly cocked the pistol which he carried in his pantaloons pocket, so that it seldom parted company with his hand.

Bowing coolly, he said:

"Far be it from me to say aught derogatory of a lady whom I esteem as highly as you can."

"Avoid all reference to her, sir. Commendation from your lips is as distasteful as detraction."

Long Jack's eyes glittered at this repeated snubbing, but he kept his temper. He had an object to attain.

"I return to my request," he said, quietly. "What is it?" snapped Felix.

"That I may be allowed to be present when you call Charles J. Wells, alias Egbert Stan—"

"To account for the fraud he practiced upon you a year ago?"

The double shot went straight home—the deception and the assumed name.

Felix ground his teeth with rage.

"Oh! the infamous scoundrel!" he muttered. "And my own—blind fool—so easily with his shallow pretense of sensitiveness! By Heaven! I'll match his birthmark with a death-mark about which there will be no sham!"

After waiting a few moments, while Felix held fierce self-communion, Long Jack asked:

"May I consider my request granted?"

"Yes, and more! I desire your presence."

"Ah! But I confess I do not see why you should particularly desire it."

"Common justice, for one thing. I insulted you, thinking that I had cause. It is meet that the apology be made in the presence of those who witnessed the affront."

Long Jack came near whistling with surprise. Here was Roman justice with a vengeance. It took him some time to digest the new aspect of affairs. Gradually he came to see it in the light of an additional humiliation to Egbert, perhaps, rather than amends to himself.

Presently he asked:

"Where do you wish my attendance?"

"Riverside."

"The fifteenth of this month."

"At what time of day?"

Felix reflected a moment.

"The boat is due at noon. Allow an hour to reach Riverside. Another hour to the toilet after travel."

Aloud he said:

"At two in the afternoon."

"I will be punctual."

A pause of a moment, and Long Jack said:

"I presume I can be of no further use to you now?"

"None whatever!" replied Felix, with a heartiness that imparted its meaning to the words.

"Then, sir, until the fifteenth!"

The gambler raised his hat with mock courtesy, a sneering smile on his lips.

"M. Bourdoine, au revoir!"

And he departed.

CHAPTER XXII.

HONOR VS. LOVE.

A LOW, mocking laugh from the gambler's lips reached Felix Cornish's ears. In his humiliation and pain the lover rested his hand upon M. Bourdoine's shoulder. Here, at least, was a true friend.

"Ah! mon ami," murmured the Frenchman, "heed not ze jeer of ze rascal. He is bote ze instrument of justice. *Parbleu!* shall ve quarrel vis ze pot because of ze smut!—bote ve shall have no *rapot* visout pot!"

"Felix's mind was too much occupied to profit by this bit of Bourdoinean philosophy."

"Monsieur," he said, "may I ask you a favor?"

"Certainly!"

"I would see my mother in this matter. I must ask you to go to her, and tell her what has transpired."

"I am rejoiced at an opportunity to serve you. I will relieve you of all embarrassment."

"Tell her that we start home by the next boat."

"And, *mon ami*, shall note I accompany you? *Sangdieu!* I shall participate in ze revenge of ze injury execrable! Ah! *ma chere Sibylle!* zat have twine ze tendril of affection around my heart."

"The Bourdoine, will you come?"

Touched by this mark of friendship, Felix spoke earnestly and grasped the hand of the Frenchman.

"Ah! vill I note?" cried M. Bourdoine. "*Gracieu! dieu!* do I live bote for ze service of my pupil?"

Together they returned to the hotel, and while M. Bourdoine sought Mrs. Cornish, Felix went to his own room to wrestle with the greatest affliction that had fallen upon his sunny life.

From his pocket he drew the daguerreotype which he had received from Long Jack. While he gazed at it he shuddered.

"Not they must not remain side by side," he said. "My love for her would be ever clouded by the sight of him. She, at least, is pure, though he is vile."

With his knife he removed the glass and carefully scratched away every portion of Egbert's face and figure, before replacing it in the case.

"No, is typical," he muttered, as he contemplated the altered picture. "At her side there is a spot as black as ink. So shall I blot him out of existence!"

He clenched his fist with anger; but suddenly he reflected:

"And then! What becomes of her love? Can she forgive the man who has slain her brother? Which does she love most?"

He turned pale with sudden dread.

"Adele! Adele!" he moaned, with his hands over his white face. "must I crush your heart? Must I kill your love?"

He rose and began to pace the room furiously.

Said the tempter:

"You cannot redeem the past. Why spoil your own future? What is required of you? You condone this one evil, and spare yourself, your sister, and Adele—who is innocent of all blame—lives of misery."

But pride uttered one word in reply, in tones as hard as adamant:

"Honor!"

He thought of his long line of ancestors, "without fear and without reproach." They seemed to point to him and say:

"In your time one married a forger—innocently; we do not blame her—but *one* hid his infamy that he might indulge a selfish passion! Out upon you for a sordid changeling!"

And before his mind's eye rose up the pale, accusing face of his proud sister.

"Coward!" it seemed to say, "dare you leave me in ignorance of my disgrace!"

Gazing at the picture, deprecatingly, he pleaded:

"My sister's honor! Can I betray her? Anything but that?"

And in his agony it seemed strange to him that she could look at him from the glass, with that sweet half-smile, all unmoved.

Then he bowed his face upon the lifeless effigy and wept.

All night long he struggled with his grief, and when he came forth in the morning he was as pale as death, yet sternly resolute.

"Mother, are you ready to start?"

"Immediately."

"We will go by the next boat."

Then the mother broke down.

"Oh, my son!"

And she threw her arms about him, sobbing hysterically.

"There! there! do not give way," he admonished. "There is one who must look to you for an example of self-possession."

"Oh, the disgrace! the disgrace!" moaned the woman, somewhat selfishly.

"Think of your daughter's pain," suggested her son.

"Felix, you will not think of marrying her, after this?"

The young man set his teeth.

"Mother, do not torture me!" he said. "Do you not see what I am suffering?"

The beads of sweat standing on his forehead, the utter woe in his wan face, the terrible despair in his bloodshot eyes, touched the woman that was in her. Laying her hand on his arm, she said simply:

"Forgive me!"

BY JOE JOT, JR.

"We can't wait," was the reply. "Some other time."

BY C. D. CLARK

"What do you want?" demanded Harry.

settle you, but now you've got your profession, and seem pretty steady, why, I think you had better be married. And a sweeter girl than Clara Benning you never met, I can assure you of that."

"All right, then; we'll fix it. I hear the girls coming. Let us go down."

"The girls? I thought you had only one sister?"

"And I'm not Bernard Burton at all, but Aubrey Peniston. Ha! ha! ha-a-a! We are caught now, Clara!"

She may be alive yet; and if she is, she is without a doubt connected with some of the numerous bands of robbers operating in the Far West.

BY FRANK DAVES

She may be alive yet; and if she is, she is without a doubt connected with some of the numerous bands of robbers operating in the Far West.